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PUNCH IN THE PULPIT.

BY

PHILIP CATER,

AUTHOR OF "THE GREAT FICTION OF THE TIMES."

"O, there be preachers that I have heard preach, and heard others praise, and that highly—not to speak it profanely—that neither having the accent of Christian, nor the reverence of Christian, Pagan, or Man, have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought that some of Nature's journeymen had made them, and not made them well, they imitated Christianity so abominably."—*Shakespeare Spiritualized.*

"Rien n'est beau que le vrai!"

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE Author of the following pages has exerted himself, and, it must be owned, with right hearty good will, to eject from the Pulpit a public character, who has done good service in his day, but who, wherever else he may be in place, has evidently no business there. On the desirableness of extruding from the house of God so unseemly an intruder, all decent people, the Editor imagines, will be quite agreed. Nor have those whom these trenchant strictures more immediately concern the smallest right to complain of the writer's using Punch's own *baton*, for the purpose of deposing him from the sacred place which he has usurped. For some evils ridicule is not only the most effective, but the most legitimate punishment and cure, and it is not for those who have so flagrantly offended against good taste and good morals, as to seek to move laughter in the sanctuary, to murmur at being made a laughingstock themselves. It will do these reverend jesters good, to remember, that with a free press confronting them, to which nobody has ever denied the right of using the lighter weapons of raillery, wit, and satire, their cherished privilege of having all the say, and all the fun to themselves, is at an end. It is too late for those clerical merry-andrews, who have been fairly caught in the cap and bells, instead of their cassocks, to declaim against the wickedness of sporting with sacred things and sacred persons. The short and sharp answer is, that *this* wickedness is all their own, and that the things and persons at which *we* laugh are anything but sacred.

But though few, save the sanctimonious sinners themselves, will care to object to the severity with which our Anthor applies the lash to their shoulders, many readers, it is not unlikely, will be a good deal surprised to learn, from this little work, the extent to which the evil has run. It is, doubtless, the common impression that these pulpit eccentricities are amongst the things that were, things which the progress of refinement has for ever rendered all but obsolete. Most readers will have imagined that however these godly *gaucheries* may have been tolerated in ruder times, they are no longer ventured upon in our own days. If they have read of the wonderful success of Latimer's famous Sermon on the Cards, they will also have heard of the country parson, whose imprudent repetition of the experiment amongst his

own smock-frocks, met with so signal a discomfiture a generation or two ago. The pulpit drolleries of Rowland Hill and Matthew Wilks, are still occasionally retailed around Evangelical tea-tables. But although a short time since an attempt to revive the same sort of thing was made by a few otherwise reputable young preachers, who flattered themselves that they could win the irreligious masses to the Gospel by spiritualizing the Great Bottle Trick, &c, &c, yet the movement happily proved to be too flagrantly out of harmony with the spirit of the times, to meet with anything beyond the most evanescent popularity, and it was soon very properly frowned down. In no Christian denomination, which can afford to keep a conscience and a character, can such questionable methods of "spoiling the Egyptians," and "turning Satan's artillery against himself," as the apologetic phrases run, ever hope to find a footing again.

It seems, however, that in the opposite quarter of the ecclesiastical heavens to that in which blaze the eccentric Revivalist stars, to whom allusion has just been made, Homiletic Farce is still in full career. Oddly enough, in the pulpits in which reigns a bastard Calvinistic theology of the most Stygian type, a theology which brands those who aim to convert sinners from the error of their way, as the most reprobate sinners themselves, funny preaching is not only occasionally resorted to, but is reduced to a system. There, of all regions in the world, in the most intimate association with this appalling system of divinity, it is not the exception but the rule. This *demi-monde* of the religious society of the day is very much less known to the public than, on several accounts, it deserves to be. Its denizens are much more numerous than many would be inclined to think, and its influence, for good or evil, upon society at large, is far from being altogether insignificant. It has its ramifications within the pale of the Establishment, where its representative periodical is the *Gospel Magazine*, as well as amongst the Dissenters, with the *Earthern Vessel* as the depositary of its inestimable treasures. To have shed a welcome light upon the sentiments and usages of this obscure, but neither small nor unimportant, if very peculiar body, with which our Author has evidently an intimate acquaintance, the Editor regards as one of the principal merits of the book, which, with these few prefatory remarks, is now commended to a wider circle of readers than it has hitherto enjoyed.

GLOSSARY OF SOME OUTLANDISH WORDS AND PHRASES FOUND IN THIS VOLUME.

Annus mirabilis, *wonderful year.*
Antinomian, *against law.*
Antistes, *chief shepherd.*
Armageddon, *mountain of Megiddo; battle of; made use of as a kind of bugbear in the "Coming Struggle."*
Beersheba, *well of the oath.*
Brasseur, *a brewer.*

Carnifex, *a hangman.*
Cave of Adullam, *in ancient times a place where every one that was distressed, every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, assembled together. Now, it signifies a chapel, to which resort all who find themselves getting lean and legal under the ordinary ministrations of the word.*
Chalkos, *sounding brass.*
Charlatanism, *deception by fine words; or brilliant appearances; quackery.*
Clement, *merciful.*
Coryphaeus, *leader of the song.*
Crotchet, *a hook; a perverse conceit.*

Debut, *a first appearance in the pulpit or elsewhere.*

Eclat, *brilliancy.*
Electron, *amber.*
Empec, *M.P.*

Ferrum, *iron.*
Fuscus, *brown.*

Gad, *a rambler.*
Gammon, *ham; cunning; artifice.*
Gog and Magog, *a roof; enemies of the church; very much made use of in the hobgoblin argument about the things which are shortly to come to pass.*

Gordian, *relating to King Gordius.*
Gourmet, *one delicate in eating.*

Hepta, *seven.*
Hiver, *winter.*
Hoi, *ho!*
Hyper, *beyond.*

Ignotus, *unknown.*

Kohelet, *a preacher.*
Kubeia, *dice; cunning, craftiness.*

Locum Tenens, *a substitute.*
LXX, *the Greek Bible.*

Magnus, *great.*
Mikros, *little.*
Mirus, *wonderful.*
Morceaux, *bits.*

Naïveté, *the simplicity of one who uses no disguise.*
Neaniskos, *a young man.*
Nugator, *a trifler.*

Pantachou, *everywhere.*
Paulus, *little.*
Philologus, *lover of learning.*
Pre-Adamite, *before Adam.*

Quintet, *relating to the number five.*

Rien n'est beau que le vrai, *nothing is beautiful but the truth.*

Semnos, *honesty or gravity.*
Shibboleth, *an ear of corn; a test word.*
Silvanus, *of the wood.*
Six hundred and sixty-six, *a prophetic number supposed to have nearly 666 interpretations; in this case it must be rather difficult to say which interpretation is the correct one.*
Skotos, *darkness.*
Soi disant, *self-styled.*
Spatalosa, *who liveth in pleasure.*

Timor, *fear.*
Tremor, *trembling.*
Triton, *a weathercock.*

Ultra, *beyond.*
Un synonime, *a synonym.*

Victor, *a conqueror.*

ANALYSIS OF THE WORK.

I.

DEDICATORY.

Inscribed to friends; the idol of popularity; a fool's cap; Punch in the Pulpit; this personage good in his way, but not out of his way; "Durham Cheese;" bull in a china shop; high doctrine and jesting go together; Popery; Christianity and Hyper-Calvinism produce their respective fruits; dispute between the devil and the angel; physician heal thyself; ridicule not absolutely wrong; putting on of solemnity like the putting on of a mask; sobriety indispensable in the church of God.

II.

NOVELTIES.

Primitive religion better than modern religion; virtue of strictness; Punch—Devil—open or strict communion with, bad; in the world new things better than old; in the church old things better than new; wonders of science; renovation of all things; whimsical preaching; now gospel nothing without mummery; certain letters of the alphabet often significant of a sham; great guns; subtilty of the serpent; novelties from ignorance; from learning; philosophic divines; gordian knot; little child; Dr. Harris; *pre*-Adamite earth! man in the moon!

III.

EXPEDIENTS.

African and his beads; religious baubles; Mr. Child likes them; Mr Müller repudiates them charlatanism; a crowded house; singing a sermon; stilts; Piccadilly; five act tragedy! Molière; sacred drama!

Cardigan; Punch in Liverpool; Mr. Fuscus; Easter offerings; one church running after another; Mrs. Zilpha Shum; a dog walking on his hind legs; a black face in the pulpit very attractive; a painted fool not so bad as a painted hypocrite; words of one syllable; Greenwich; calico at sixpence a yard; St. Paul's Cathedral; amusement; purgatory; snow balls; quintet union; fancy fair; Lord Tinman; chapel debts worse than other debts; Sunday orations to popularize the Gospel; Shylock; Garibaldi; Theodore Hook, &c.; age of veneer; God a reality; sincerity and truth not to be despised.

IV.

PUNCH A GOSPEL HERALD.

No personal acquaintance with Mr. Medley, who makes him so; laughter without folly, and humour without sin; firmament of living brightnesses; Punch a forerunner of Jesus Christ; unfitness for the office; chip of the old block; minister wearing a fool's cap for the sake of the working classes; experience of Miss *Spataloso;* youth of Mr. Medley; people like him for his raciness and facetiousness; love of Christ; great bottle trick; want of manliness; clown grinning through a horse collar not a perfect type of a great man.

V.

QUEER HYMNOLOGY.

Paper kites; hymns without praise, like wells without water; "Come let us join our cheerful songs;" in many cases we can't do it; my notion not a crotchet; resemblance between singing and praying; in both one object of adoration; direct address; singing descriptive pieces; divine commands; singing our sorrows; the doom of the wicked; God's language to his people; singing to all manner of persons and to all manner of things; defective hymn books; Dr. Watts called in for amusement; singing to quell a disturbance; Newman Hall; every hymn should have its own tune; mal-appropriation; solemnity of worship!

VI.

SURREY MUSIC HALL.

Place of amusement converted into a place of worship; floating mass; some new thing; more earthly than heavenly; scene before the gates; in the gardens; in the hall; buying and selling; no orange girls; great sensation on the arrival of my Lord This and my Lady That; serio-comic sermon and fun; money and money boxes; comparison of the preacher of the Surrey Music Hall and the preacher of the Surrey Tabernacle; priest and Peter Roe; Surrey Music Hall closed, but heaven still open to all believers.

VII.

ANNUS MIRABILIS, 1867.

Mr. Timor selling off preparatory to the millenium; George Robins; groundless fears; blowing the trumpet; end of the world; why desire it? it is a very beautiful one; Edward Irving; his vagaries still rife; Charles XII.; Joseph Wolfe; false alarms, 1847, Manchester; Dr. Cumming, 1867; prophetic rashness leads to infidelity; signs of the times; crotchets; Mr. Lincoln; yearday theory; can't get general conclusions out of particular premises; fanciful analogies; insanity; coming struggle; coming tribulation; secret of happiness and of safety; positive theology better than negative.

VIII.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE.

Display; most magnificent Non-conformist chapel in Bloomsbury; preliminary opening; conferring a kind of half baptism; laughable matters at the opening; young persons pleased with trifles; old people likewise; propriety of monsters very questionable; Great Eastern; Capt. Gulliver; Dial; Big Ben; 1. Monsters expensive; queer ways of getting money; chapel in Walworth; is God as clearly seen at the Elephant and Castle as at Ashley Down? 2. A vortex no good; what should a crack regiment be composed of? 3. a panic; fearful consequences of one at Music hall; lewd fellows of the baser sort; 4. Preacher on the high road to ruin; exertions beyond our strength; a congregation of a thousand a good stint for *any* man; let the bees swarm, but provide no monster hive for them; Albert Smith; brain; Luke; Green; Blondin; don't try to out-do all others; no divine promise in support of such efforts Rev. J. Blackburn.

IX.

THE SINGING GALLERY.

The late Rev. J. A. James; Peter and Mr. Deacon; a dialogue about Apollo; how he got into the singing gallery; how he could not be got out of it; severe lecture; 1. Singers marked off; singing by proxy; good; bad, and indifferent; Bishop of Ripon; 2. Motives; ought we to please men rather than to please God? love for the music, or love for the musicians, draw people to chapel; 3. Doing evil that good may come; a sham; giving thanks for blessings we never received; 4. Two services going on at the same time; one rather different from the other; 5. Dr. Crotchet; his wig; Mr. Bass; a strike; leaving heaven in the lurch; choir like a certain pope; 6. Amusement and religion, a queer compound, suited neither to the sinner nor to the saint; mode of improving congregational singing; too much homage to Mr. Apollo.

X.

ANTINOMIANISM.

Sermon on the mount; Arminian; religious world, not altogether good nor altogether bad; Antinomians; theoretical and practical; what is Antinomianism? has different hues like the chamcleon; three signs of it by John Flavel; a fourth by a later hand; Hart's Antinomian experience; late Rev. Harrington Evans; red nose; Dr. Strongman a hyper and a tippler at the same time; popularity the reward of immorality; dialogue between Miss Twankay and Mr. Gunpowder; strange revelations; must not speak to relatives about their souls, lest we interfere with the work of the Spirit; picture of Mr. Fulsome, drawn by one of the old masters; no religion without morality.

XI.

JOCULAR PREACHING—ACCOMPANIMENTS OF IT.

Vocabulary of nick names always ready for use; sacred grove at Camberwell; there the sheep don't like the new shepherd; gives them food which causes wry faces and strange noises; police called into the fold to maintain order; dog and tin kettle; meaning of Mr. Hyper's name; his views and levity go together, not accidentally, but necessarily; he that is full of fun cannot be full of faith and of the Holy Ghost; Tom Bradbury; John Newton; Billy Dawson; "'Tis a point I long to know;" Mr. Strange Medley; things which accompany jocular preaching; ignorance; spiritualizing; Devil; puns; parodies and stupid questions; laconic texts and impromptu sermons; my method of treating pulpit drollery.

XII.

LEARNING—SPIRITUALIZING.

Learning.

Ignorance; language made use of by the Holy Spirit; neither learning nor ignorance will make a man a Christian, or take him to heaven; Lindley Murray; Hyper-calvinistic Club; harmlessness of learning.

Spiritualizing.

Barbarous word; meaning of it still more so; pearl of great price spiritualized by Dr. OW; sundial spiritualized by Dr. Wells; Gog and Magog; a dish of nuts; with the nut cracker; anxiety for nuts, like the papist's anxiety for dead men's bones; curiosities of religion; nut-cracking an edifying sound; Hyper-calvinists like the ancient alchemist—one turns baser metals into gold, the other turns "old shoes and clouted" into gospel; Dean Swift's devout meditation on a broomstick.

XIII.

THE DEVIL.

Smoking a pipe with; Earthen Vessel; Warburton's great intimacy with; in the Hyper theology the Devil always plays a conspicuous part; St. Dunstan; Mc. Gowan's Dialogue of Devils; Rev. T. Binney; very often speak too familiarly of the Devil; short dialogue between Dr. Cox and Chaffinch, the latter very droll and very devout at the same time; Berridge; pulpit eloquence like pulpit cushions, and why.

XIV.

PUNS AND PARODIES, AND STUPID QUESTIONS.

Fools expose religion to ridicule; Charles II. and Dr. Mountain; baptism with a wooden scoop; with a squirt; Dr. Chalmers; apology for punning; scene in college; Jeremy Bentham's profanity; Dr. Cumming's Hebrew roots; Hudibras; smoking tobacco; opinion of the Greek church about it.

Specimens of stupid questions; futility of them; cannot affect the foundation of God; religious entertainment by Dr. Nugator; cave of Adullam.

XV.

LACONIC TEXTS AND IMPROMPTU SERMONS.

Paganini, an extraordinary fiddler; Dr. Dodd, an extraordinary preacher; Bridge street Chapel, Greenwich; a high day; brother Silvester, and "onwards;" brother Silvanus, and "donkey;" startled by a rural sound; TION, for a text; Holy Spirit; ridicule not always unlawful; *impromptu sermons* readily furnished, and eagerly swallowed; extremes meet; gospel pharisees; manufactured sermons; composition of them; Mr. Ultra guilty of a pious fraud; man of one sermon: Mr. Jay; things which do not accompany salvation, but which accompany the jocular preaching of it.

XVI.

JOCULAR PREACHING—APOSTLES OF IT.

Hyper partialities; a craving for what is savory no sign of robust health; union of Hyperism and witticism; Adelphi Sunday School; all preachers wrong except Latchford; a preaching prayer and a merry sermon; first impressions under it; convulsed with laughter and covered with shame; novel ideas of the ministry; a cuffing expected; third of Isaiah; monkey in a black coat; and a man robbing the Almighty; stop thief! a manner irresistibly comic; good things, queer things, and all sorts of things; Dr. Hawker not coarse, but sneering and satirical; the evil tendency of his preaching.

XVII.

HUNTINGTON AND HIS SUCCESSORS.

Huntington and Cobbett compared; coalheaving necessary; coach and four; Romaine; Huntington barber to Timothy Priestly; black cat; diploma of S. S. origin and meaning of it: imitators; John Vinal, the last of them; domestic scenes; illiberal expositors of divine providence; predictions; name of Huntington forgotten; those whom he ridiculed still remembered.

XVIII.

GADSBY AND WARBURTON.

Ungenerous ridicule; Dr. Watts; foundry; a funny sermon, and a giggling congregation; not a dry eye in the place; Gadsby's *debût* in Manchester; Gadsby's description of ministers not of his school; Warburton's interview with Huntington; origin of it; oddity of it; revelations of it; result of it; Rev. Mr. Cockles very popular; candle snuffed with the tongs.

XIX.

JOCULAR PREACHING—SPECIMENS OF IT.

MAGNUS.

Fullerton; Scylla and Charybdis; object; truthfulness of; specimens; sense of the ridiculous; piquancy of joke; Magnus a jester and a giant; do, do, do; gibbet; a trap; four in hand; big man; duty faith; pulpit begging; Chobham; John Wesley; Spanish chalk! O dear, what's the matter with me? Dr. Gurnall; half-a-crown; fudge; tulip; balsam pot; bilious complaint; mixture of fun with everlasting love; pistol; boxed on both ears; flummery meetings.

XX.

MIKROS.

Little men think themselves great men; Coryphæus; a blow which nearly cracked the "Earthen Vessel;" two devils instead of one; humanity of Mikros better than his divinity; God hated some from all eternity; Mr. Wyard; self-laudation; people like fun; friend of Mikros advises him to leave off joking; swine; pole cat; dog's neck; buttered piety; Swedenborgian deacons; book of life; chandler shop kind of man; 666; explanation; bottle of stuff to get up a revival; cock-a-doodle-do; imitator of God not necessarily an imitator of cock crowing; Mr. Bloomfield; duty faith; Mikros an A. B. C. preacher.

XXI.

IGNOTUS.

Laughs *audibly* in the pulpit; "Earthen Vessel" organ of the laughter loving school of divines; brother Garrard; play-house; Bible a jest book; religion a farce; brother Gurnall; preachers like butchers who blow up their meat; Rachel.

XXII.

NEANISKOS.

Pity that he should be in the same category with pulpit jokers; stage actors put on; impudence not the boldness of Peter and John; Bishop Hall; man who always speaks about the Bible must say some good things; fly in the ointment; difficult for God to drive out self-righteousness; Arminianism Devil's strong hold; heart as bad as the Devil without conversion, and with it too; story telling; evils of it; "douce the glim:" paying like a sinner; public story tellers; not always public liars; moonshine; no piety without honesty; protest against the doctrine of Mikros; way of procuring sleep; old house; deacons like devils; a generous public gives too much.

XXIII.

PAULUS AND PHILOLOGUS.

Independents: praying like preaching; do a little dirty work; some great man at St. John's Wood; Arminian darkness worse than drunken darkness; Philologus wears Latchford's mantle: Zaccheus; stop thief! meaning of the Greek: different ways to heaven; Jacob's ladder.

XXIV.

REASONS FOR JOCULARITY.

Defence of what is queer; rather common; a freak; right to contend for or against an opinion; man's nature is comic; sexual love; not every natural feeling to be appealed to in preaching: there is a time to laugh but not in chapel; employment of ridicule by distinguished orators; Christian orator unique; not right for him to employ carnal weapons; God is not a funny God; death and eternity no game; no laughing basis for our faith.

XXV.

ROWLAND HILL.

This name a strong tower for merry parsons; apology for them; more specious than solid; pulpit drollery gave Rowland Hill *éclat*, but did not give him usefulness; Dr. Watt's to be imitated in all things

except his Nonconformity; Rowland Hill in all things excepting his jocularity; modern pulpit jesters not like him. 1. His humour was natural; Hammersmith; Mundy; ostler; roasted apple; stupid gravity. 2. Unconscious of his own humour; unlike those who laugh at their own folly; naïveté; pray that the old woman may soon go to heaven. 3. Not guilty of scurrilous jesting; Armainian more worthy of abuse than a drunkard or a thief; venerable Bede; "that dung hole."

XXVI.

DR. DRYASDUST.

Know him well; don't like him well; Dr. Macknight quite dry; commendation of joking: young preachers should not resemble Dr. Dryasdust; they should have pulpit earnestness; but what is it? 1. Not the utterance of jokes and laughable stories; what concord is there between this and Christ's presence? 2. Not a brazen face and a stentorian voice; no merit in mumbling a sermon; but no good in roaring out one; calmness and dignity. 3. Not in mere nervous excitement: appearances deceitful; pulpit oratory may consist with a small stock of personal piety; Mr. Victor; went down to his grave enveloped in gloom. 4. What pulpit earnestness really is; holy animation springing from an honest heart; great piety makes a great preacher; Mr. Kohelet; hence greatness of Whitfield, and littleness of those superior to him, in point of learning.

XXVII.

PRAYER MEETINGS.

Thornton and Berridge: Mr. Gad and Mr. Staid: dialogue between them; "itching ears;" variety; four sermons a day! sermon hunting as invigorating as fox-hunting; go in for the sermon not for the prayer: great prayer meeting; those who pray go from Dan to Beersheba, and much farther; "take it by the tail:" much amusement, Mr. Archer; minister highly complimented; to prevent prayer meetings becoming spare meetings, introduce Punch into them; variety is pleasing; running a wild goose chase; better stay at home.

XXVIII.

NEWSPAPARS AND RELIGIOUS MAGAZINES.

Their praise of jocularity much to be deplored; in them editors praise what elsewhere they condemn; some columns support what is good, others what is bad; all religious papers not in the same commendation; brandy and gin; quack medicines; prophecies of Zadkiel; obscene books: praise from a paper that advertizes these things not worth much; literary prostitution; the course of Dr. Gammon; no better than that of the strange woman.

XXIX.

POPULARITY.

Is no crime; popular preacher must be a popular jester: public a great simpleton; pictures of Punch preferred to those of Raphael; common people heard him gladly; fish not so good as fish sauce; Col. Sibthorpe; laughing legislators; be extremely funny, and you will be extremely popular; Albert Smith obliged to take Punch and Judy with him into the Egyptian hall: Thornton to Berridge; Kingsgate-street Chapel; Mr. Empee; yawning: Paddy; popularity bought at too dear a rate; Theodore Parker; Edward Irving not like Balaam: holding men's eloquence in admiration because of advantage.

XXX.

REASONS AGAINST JOCULARITY.

Proceeds from an over-weening conceit of self-importance; but not always so; "of some have compassion:" Sammy Hick; Father Hinton; old hag; squint eye; Rev. George Rose; New Zealand congregation; Antinomian pharisees; youth and inexperience; God's decrees not better understood now than formerly.

XXXI.

INJURY TO THE PEOPLE.

The satisfaction derived from jocularity only transient; is destructive of spiritual worship; in the service of God there ought to be the solemnity of death, and the silence of the grave; a stranger witnessing your devotions should be struck with their unearthliness; should never see Punch in the pulpit, not levity in the pews; suspicion of minister's sincerity: because he never jokes when he sees a man falling into the fire, but does so when he sees a man falling into hell; Hume no joker; experience of an unbeliever under a jocular sermon.

XXXII.

DEATH TO THE MINISTER.

Effects of galvanism on a dead frog analogous to those of Hyper-Calvinism on a dead man; Harrington Evans laments his love of joking; Berridge; shocking familiarity of vultures with man; shocking familiarity of preachers with Christ; Henry Martyn; Mr. Woyzo; his popularity; his state in dying circumstances: born with a fool's cap: falls off in approaching the throne of grace.

XXXIII.

GREAT PREACHERS NO JOKERS.

Cowper's negative picture of a great preacher; the wonderful James Bridaine; ingenious contrivances; surprising abnegation of self; and surprising success of his ministry; triumphant in the agonies of death; John Howe: John Bunyan; Whitfield and Wesley: Richard Watson; Robert Hall; Dr. Chalmers: the holy youth, Thomas Spencer, formerly of Liverpool; reverence and godly fear only slavish chains in the estimation of some.

XXXIV.

NO JOKERS AT REVIVALS.

A jovial parson acceptable to a jovial people; Ulster revival; a jocular divine there like the devil among the sons of God; Mr. Radcliffe; Deptford convocation of strict Baptists; a revival meeting, but oh, such a revival!

XXXV.

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?

Thornton; Elijah; Christ; His Apostles; Paul a drunkard, and Peter a swearer, quite as likely as that either of them should be a joker; a good market for jokers, in the days of the Apostles; Macrobius; not always necessary to tie the brow and squeeze the brain; a minister might laugh heartily even in chapel, without laughing criminally; Jay's story about a bull being one of his hearers; a handsome concession to Dr. Chalkos.

XXXVI.

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?

2 Cor. i. 17; a shibboleth; flesh—spirit; no yea and nay gospel; sleepy effects of a prosy sermon counteracted by a joke; Eph. iv. 29; Hab. ii. 2, wrongly quoted; grieving the Spirit: Balaam quoted in support of the Hyper theology; and of the impeccability of Hyper theologians; Eph. v. 4, sanctified obscenity; Titus ii. 7; gravity of a donkey: grimace; *semnos*, no sincerity without gravity; Psalm lxxxix. 7; might be twisted and turned, but not legitimately, in support of jesting; conclusion: solemn considerations for all jesters; Amen.

PUNCH IN THE PULPIT.

LETTER I.

DEDICATORY.

To my Friends in Bath, Canterbury, Newmarket, and Brompton, near London.

HAVING sustained the pastoral office in each of these places, you cannot be otherwise than well acquainted with the writer of the following pages. I confess, however, that the public is scarcely acquainted with him at all; yet I am far from thinking that it is a very stupid public on that account, or that it is of little consequence whether a minister is one of its favourites or not. On the contrary, I believe that it may be a very useful thing for him to be generally known: and a very honourable thing for him to be generally approved of. But this little piece of egotism is introduced, not for my own sake, but for the sake of what I am writing about, or rather, for the sake of bespeaking *your* favourable attention to an humble attempt at stripping off the gilt from that ecclesiastical gingerbread which is so much admired in the present day.

I fear with regard to some, that popularity is the idol at whose shrine they bow; and that in dancing attendance upon this idol, they have been induced to put on a fool's cap, or a harlequin's coat, to make odd assertions and to raise false alarms, not so much to please God, as to please the majesty of the people. If you wish to know how they have done this, and why they have done this, read the following letters. In doing so, you will be taking no undue liberty; you will become no busy bodies in other men's matters; and you will really give no offence to Dr. Gammon, nor to any of the other worthies to whom these letters are more particularly inscribed.

I have called my book "Punch in the Pulpit." Not that I have any desire to vilify *Punch*, or to deny him the merit of having done some good service in the regions of humanity and of common sense. Indeed, there are cases in which his functions may be almost exclusively exercised for "the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well." Of this we have a striking example in the affair of the "Durham Cheese,"* for by no politician, and by no ecclesiastic, was that affair more faithfully exposed, rebuked, and condemned than by this celebrated personage. But I contend that Punch can do no good in the pulpit any more than a bull can do any good in a china shop. There he might make a clatter, and collect a crowd; there he might create amusement or create alarm; but all this would never prove that his operations were useful, that his position was glorious, or that he was the right animal in the right place.

The principal design, however, of this publication is to show that foolish talking or "jesting which is

* *Punch* 3.'61.

not convenient" is inseparably connected with that spurious Christianity called antinomianism or hyper-calvinism. Now, if this is clearly made out, then also will be clearly made out the worthlessness of that system, because our Lord said, "By their fruits ye shall know them"—a test which may not only be applied to false prophets, but also to false systems of religion. For instance, let a man be deeply imbued with the spirit of popery, and he will be glad, and even give thanks to God for the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and for the cruel deeds of a church which has been drunk with the blood of the saints, and which has destroyed all that was mortal of more than ten thousand servants of the Lord. Let a man be deeply imbued with the spirit of Christianity, and he will always treat with kind consideration those *brethren* whose theology may differ from his own; but let a man be deeply imbued with the spirit of hyper-calvinism, and he will treat those whom he deems mistaken brethren, with ridicule or contempt; he will call them "free-willers," "duty-faith men," &c.; he will give them all sorts of nicknames, and cover them with all sorts of religious abuse. But in so doing he will as infallibly proclaim the badness of his system, as the evil fruit proclaims the badness of the tree which produces it.

I pretend to no vision or revelation from the Lord on this subject; yet I feel some degree of confidence in saying to such a man, "I have a message from God unto thee." Recollect that neither the wrath of man nor the ridicule of man can work the righteousness of God; and that, "Michael while contending with the Devil about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, the Lord rebuke thee." And if the Archangel would not rail against the very Devil himself, who are we

that we should rail against Christian men or against any weak brother for whom Christ died?

I freely admit that I have no more right to ridicule a Hyper than a Hyper has to ridicule me. I mention this because it might be said, "The fault you find with others you have fallen into yourself." Not exactly so; but still I confess to something like ridicule in one or two of the following letters. But then the evils I had to contend with seemed to impose upon me this mode of treating them; and my objections lie not so much against the employment of ridicule as against the employment of it in the pulpit. There it is quite out of character and quite out of place. Let a preacher be guilty of it, and I will never say that he is a man sent from God; and I would never send for him to adminster the consolations of religion in a dying hour. Don't be weak enough to say, "Ah, but he can be very solemn for that particular occasion." Can he? Then so much the worse; for that would only prove that he can act a part, and that he can put on solemnity as a man putteth on a mask to conceal what he really is, and to appear what he really is not!

Religion, though not a gloomy thing, is a very solemn thing after all: and therefore to joke about it can only consist with the ribaldry of an infidel or with the levity of a fool. Behold the judge standeth before the door! Eternity is at hand. Soon we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Let us, therefore, "be *sober*, and hope to the end, looking for the mercy of God unto eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Yours in all sincerity and truth,

PHILIP CATER.

LETTER II.

NOVELTIES.

To the Editor of the "Primitive Church Magazine."

I LIKE what is primitive more than what is speculative, or merely outwardly attractive in the church of God. Therefore, I take the liberty of addressing myself to you on the subject of certain grievous departures from "the faith once delivered to the saints." I trust that I shall not be taking an undue liberty in doing so, for I know that you would stigmatize certain modern innovations as nothing better than wretched substitutes for the sacred institutions of primitive times. As you recommend the book of Mr. Magnus, on duty-faith, I conclude that you belong to the Hyper school. On one point, indeed, you are very strict, and for the maintenance of it, you really display a zeal that is *beyond* all praise. Like a sentinel you stand at the gates of Zion, blowing the trumpet and sounding the alarm, lest one class of Christians should sit down with another class of Christians at the table of our common Lord —an iniquity on account of which "the land mourneth." But there are evils, if possible, of greater magnitude than this, and calling more loudly for the watchful eye and the warning voice; for, if in this,

but more especially in the subsequent letters, I can show that Punch has got into the pulpit, the Devil into the singing gallery, and amusement into the congregation, then shall I show a mixed communion of a most pernicious kind, and a state of things which ought to be overthrown, even as the tables of the money changers were overthrown, and the seats of those who sold sheep and oxen and doves in the temple of the Lord.

Before I proceed, I wish to remark, that while our church affairs should bear upon them the impress of primitive times, our secular affairs should bear upon them the impress of modern times; that they should always be modified and adjusted to the ever-varying circumstances and to the ever-shifting scenes of this transitory world. At any rate, that they should never be stereotyped, but that their elements should be distributed and set up over and over again till there arise new forms of beauty and of usefulness, or new and improved editions of whatever can minister to the wants, or contribute to the general interests of mankind.

Of late years we have had proof enough that our present state is one of progress and of development. The slumbers of ages have been disturbed; all nations are awakened as with the sound of a trumpet; and man, starting from his couch, sleeps no more, is inactive no more, is stationary no more; but urged on by the irresistible spirit of the times, he has looked out more than they that watch for the morning—I say more than they that watch for the morning, for some new light that shall guide him into the more scientific or more successful management of worldly affairs. He has not looked out in vain, for discoveries have been made and improvements have taken place hitherto unexampled in the

annals of our country and in the history of the world.

So rapidly has one revolution succeeded another, and so extensively has the crooked been made straight, and the rough places plain, that the world is no longer what it once was, nor what it will be when a few more years shall have passed away. Whither is it going? No doubt to some state of wonderful perfection or wonderful existence which the vulture's eye hath not seen, and which is hidden from the eyes of all living! It is true, that as in the days of our forefathers, so now, we have the morning light and evening shade, the seed time and harvest, the summer and the winter, the cold and the heat, the day and the night, the rain which cometh down and the snow from heaven; but with the exception of these beautiful vicissitudes resulting from the operation of nature's unchangeable laws, what is there that has not been altered, moved out of its place, or moulded into another form? Yea, what element or operation of the universe is there which has not been invoked, which has not been invited, and which has not been ultimately compelled to be the servant of man, and to perform duties which it never performed before? Or when was the truth more illustriously exhibited, that God has "crowned man with glory and honour," that he has "made him to have dominion over the works of his hands," and that "he hath put all things under his feet?"

If not in our sacred, yet in our secular affairs, we have been "called out of darkness into marvellous light;" "old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new." And the new things are better than the old; but in religion, "no man having drunk old wine straightway desireth new, for

he saith the old is better;" not better for the taste that is worldly or vitiated, but better for the taste that can discern both good and evil. For the sake of example, let me refer to the novel ways of preaching the gospel, or, rather, to the novelties which have been connected with it. Like the sun, and like the moon, and like the air that we breathe, the gospel is always the same, incapable of improvement, and never requiring revolution or reform; but the way of making it known is not so; modes of illustrating the truth and modes of enforcing the truth are like the stars in the sky for multitude, and as the sand upon the sea shore, which is innumerable. But admitting this, there ought to be something solemn, and something apostolical in the mode of setting it forth. In the present day this reasonable condition of good preaching is too often lost sight of. The pulpit is degraded by something whimsical, artful, or jocular, or by something that is like a concession or a compliment to the crotchets of believers, or even to the prejudices and partialities of ungodly men!

There seems now to be a wide spread conviction, that apart from some kind of novelty or of some kind of mummery, the gospel has lost its power of operating on the public mind. If it is not so, why is mere amusement so often blended with it? And why is there so much anxiety to parade certain great names who are to proclaim it? And to parade the literary distinctions, or even the pretended literary distinctions of those great names? Never do M.A., D.D., Ph.D., and other letters of the alphabet appear more unscriptural or more contemptible than when they are made use of for purposes of religious ostentation, or for producing or perpetuating a sham.

You call certain men "great guns." But what is

the origin of their greatness? I will tell you. When I was in Dublin, the late Dr. Cope informed me that Dr. Hiver got a diploma instead of a monkey. The case was this:—Some American ladies were escorted to the menagerie at Exeter Change by Mr. Hiver: there he saw an American monkey, with whose antics he was very much pleased. The ladies, perceiving this, promised on their return that they would send him over one of the same kind. But they found afterwards that the animal was not to be obtained. Failing, therefore, in their efforts to catch a monkey, they succeeded, by hook or by crook, in obtaining a diploma instead of it. This they sent over to Mr. Hiver, who thus became a learned divine on account of the scarcity or the extinction of a certain race of monkeys in the new world.

Now, whether you believe this story or not, I can assure you that some men owe their clerical honours or literary distinctions to no higher source. You will then allow that honours thus obtained are worse than useless, that they are a practical lie, and even a stigma upon those who wear them, and especially on those who are proud of them. The other day the master of a collegiate school informed me that Ph.D. meant nothing more and nothing less than fiddle-faddle or fiddle-de-dee. And remember, that your concerts, your bazaars, and fancy fairs, your magic lanterns, and your clap-trap announcements never can make men fall in love with religion, never can make them more prayerful, or more instrumental in promoting the interests of a kingdom which is not of this world. It may make them fall in love with a kind of fussy, bubbling, spasmodic religion, which is no more like Christ's religion than a painted fire is like a real one, or than a marble statue is like unto a living man.

Though not to you, yet to many it might be said, "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your mind should be corrupted from the simplicity of Christ;" lest you should love him not for his own sake, but for the sake of some worldly ornament or some worldly preferment connected with him; lest you should prefer the servant to the master; lest you should mistake the wood, the hay, and the stubble, for the gold and the silver and the precious stones; lest you should go to chapel or to church, not because Christ is there, but because music is there; because oratory is there, because jocularity is there; because Isaac or Rebekah is there; because secular interest or worldly advantage is there; or because something is there which has no necessary connection with the truth or with the answer of a good conscience before God.

Our religious novelties sometimes spring up from ignorance and narrow-mindedness; but very often they spring up in an opposite direction; and the greatest troublers in Israel have not been persons knowing too little, but persons knowing too much; who, laying claim to more sagacity than what is common to man, profess to have found out the *rationale* of religion and the hidden meaning of the universe. But upon examination, it will be discovered that they have found out nothing; nothing to make religion more rational, or the ways of God more intelligible; nothing to solve that greatest of all problems, the existence of evil; and the existence of it, under the kind superintendence of that Being who could have prevented it, and who could destroy it in a moment, or in the twinkling of an eye. But we are very poor judges of what God ought to do, or of what he ought not to do: we only see a very small

arc of the cycle of his dispensations. Holy and reverend in his name. But still, it may be permitted to us to observe that it is a wonderful thing that man should have been struck with a blow that has been felt through all generations, and that the whole creation should groan and travail in pain together until now. Here is the Gordian knot of theology, and the difficulty which lies at the root of all our plausible theories and of all our ancient or modern systems of divinity. At the same time, here is a powerful reason why all sects should be clothed with humility as with a garment, and why they should not only contend earnestly, but contend dispassionately, and above all contend charitably for the faith, or about the faith once delivered to the saints.

Whosoever receiveth not the kingdom of God as a little child cannot enter therein, and cannot be useful therein, cannot be happy therein, and cannot be peaceable therein. In that kingdom we are not to reason, but to obey; not to question, but to adore. We might as well be fox-hunters or dancing masters as philosophic divines; that is, as to any good that philosophy will do us in fulfilling the duties or in enjoying the privileges of the Christian life. This is not saying that we should be allied to anything like childishness or cant, or that we should be soft-headed brethren, or hollow-hearted saints. No! only in malice we must be like children, but in understanding we must be like men. We must also "beware lest any man spoil us through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the elements of the world, and not after Christ."

The late Dr. Harris was never less useful than when he became a philosophic divine. Before this with what propriety did he write about the Adamite earth, with what fidelity did he denounce

the covetousness of the age, and with what beauty and clearness did he show the way of moral transformation, the duty of Christian benevolence, and the way of happiness and of everlasting life. But alas! in an evil hour he published a treatise on the pre-Adamite earth; then his utterances which before had been so clear and so distinct, became visionary, confused, and void of common sense. Wandering into the uncertain regions of speculation and conjecture, he darkens counsel by words without knowledge, propounds laws for divine operations, and makes many assertions which declare not the glory of God nor promote the happiness of man. That his work contains many beautiful thoughts cannot be denied; but with regard to his main design, Dr. Harris might just as well have written a treatise about the man in the moon, as have written a treatise about the *pre*-Adamite earth!

LETTER III.

EXPEDIENTS.

To Mr. Child, of Kubeia, in the Kingdom of Skotos.

THE poor African was in ecstacies, not on account of certain precious truths, but on account of certain pretty beads and paltry toys which the missionary had presented to him. Now, you are somewhat like that untutored savage, because you are better pleased with certain religious baubles than with the pearl of great price. For instance, with what glee did you speak of the last great fancy fair, got up for the benefit of your church. You told me how the young men and maidens were walking together in love; how the amusements were exhilirating, and the refreshments unexceptionable; how the gewgaws and the gimcracks went off at prices quite remunerative; and how every thing at that fair seemed to indicate that "the time to favour Zion, yea, that the set time was come." But here will I stop. Do you not know that in all this there is no indication of religious prosperity? Mr. Müller, of Bristol, *has* religious prosperity; but he repudiates all such means for promoting it, or for sustaining it. Now, no one can say that he, relying too much on faith and prayer, and too little on outside show, can obtain no money for the support of his orphans, his schools, and his missionary labourers in different

parts of Europe, and in different parts of the world. All your worldly and vulgar expedients for getting money not only dwindle into insignificance, but even into absolute contempt before the work of faith and labour of love of that distinguished man.

This, however, is a kind of digression: my principal object is to offer some strictures on the questionable means which are sometimes resorted to for getting money, and likewise for getting what is called a crowded house. I can easily conceive how a preacher may be philosophical, or even prophetical, without being a charlatan; but I really don't know what to say of a man who sings his sermon in blank verse instead of delivering it in the usual way. It is not long ago since this was done. How he could keep his countenance while doing it I cannot imagine; that his hearers must have looked blank enough I can easily believe. Who would choose to walk on stilts instead of walking on his legs? Only he who, giving himself out for some great one, is desirous of doing that which shall make himself talked of. If you had done this, I should have said it was childish; but when *your* friend does this, I must say, that it is foppish, or at least that it has the appearance of being so; but still I am not quite sure that there is not a more charitable view of the case. You may say that he has no ambition to appear like Punch in the Pulpit, to mount Parnassus, or to walk on stilts; but that he does all this, or submits to all this, for the glory of God, and for the good of souls, and especially for those souls found in the neighbourhood of Regent Street, and of Piccadilly!

A five act tragedy is read by a minister from his own pulpit! It would be too much to say that in doing this he was guilty of a sinful act; but it would be too little to say that he was guilty of a very im-

prudent one; for such a sorry spectacle is likely to create a desire for the stage, where five act tragedies can always be exhibited to much greater advantage than from the pulpit. Molière had two sons; one a clergyman, the other a comedian. A friend meeting the father one day, the following significant dialogue took place between them——

Friend. How is your son?
Molière. Which of them?
Friend. The Comedian.
Molière. Which of them?

Many like Molière would insinuate that religion is nothing better than a farce, and that its ministers are nothing better than comedians. Such an insinuation is very ungenerous, but you ought to do nothing, and to applaud nothing, which can give it countenance in the public mind.

The following account is rather startling; but it points out the serio-comic state into which we are drifting, and at the same time is quite of a piece with other questionable expedients for enlisting sinners under the banner of the cross, and to which I am now directing your attention.

SACRED DRAMA!

March, 1860, Joseph and his Brethren was performed in Bethesda Chapel, under the patronage of the minister. The characters were dressed in Oriental costume, that is, in white calico, while Joseph's coat was of many colours. At Dothan, Joseph is pitched into a neighbouring pew, instead of being thrown into a pit. There are mimic blessings, weepings, marches, and counter-marches, round the chapel, amidst unbounded applause; and the same piece is announced for repetition at Cardigan, and at other places.

To this you reply that Cardigan is an obscure town, but you know that Liverpool is not so; and

there your friend, Mr. Fuscus, a grave divine, is lecturing on the beauties of Punch! This is Punch in the pulpit with a witness. Now I am not going to say that this well-known character is no wit, and no just censor of the follies of the age; but I am going to say that he is no gentleman, otherwise he would not take the unwarrantable liberty of caricaturing certain illustrious noblemen—illustrious for their excellent virtues, as for their exalted rank—merely to make the people laugh, and to subserve the purposes of a catch-penny publication. I know that your friend is carried away with the wide spread desire for amusement in religion; but he is really carried away beyond recall, if he thinks that the spirit of Punch can co-operate with the Spirit of God in producing conviction of sin, or the purification of the heart.

I know that Punch can now and then look very grave, or, rather that he can try to look so; for gravity is so foreign to his nature, that his noblest efforts in this direction are but clumsily performed. Indeed, never does he appear more ridiculous than when trying to appear as sober as a judge, or to shine in any quality that cannot properly belong to him. As, for instance, if a Baptist Minister should publish himself as the *incumbent* of his chapel, and put on clerical garments, or even issue circulars about his "Easter offerings." I will not deny that all this may be done, at least professedly done, in aid of Christ's cause, and I will not deny that it may be done in good faith; at any rate, I have no right to call in question the motives of a brother. But I have yet to learn that such things are consistent with true modesty, or that "Easter offerings" can be reckoned among the "precious things of God."

Some dissenters are imitating the Establishment, while they are declaiming against it. This is really ungenerous. Why do we make our meeting houses cruciform, and call them churches? Why do we decorate them with windows of stained glass, and with figures called the four evangelists, without having any proof of their resemblance to the four evangelists? We speak of pious frauds, but is not this wilful misrepresentation like one of them. One meeting house is indeed baptized St. David's; after a man who was no doubt as much a saint, and even more a saint than any in the Calendar. But let us cease to decry the Establishment, or cease to ape the Establishment. I will not lay down as a general rule, but really in some cases dissenters are running after the Church of England, and the Church of England is running after the Church of Rome, while the Church of Rome is always running after the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Before I proceed to my next illustration, I think it necessary to say that in these pages I call no male preacher, and certainly no female preacher, "Punch in the Pulpit." I merely employ the term to designate all those worldly expedients, and especially all those laughable expedients, which are made use of to promote the interests of religion and the comfort of the people of God. No reasoning can better illustrate my meaning than the following announcement:—"On Sunday next, 1860, two sermons will be preached by Mrs. Zilpha Shum,* a lady of colour, in the Independent Chapel, near Peckham."

All honour to our black brethren, and to our black sisters, "who are no more strangers and foreigners,

* "A woman's preaching is like a dog walking on his hind legs: you never expect to see it done well, but the wonder is that ever it should be done at all."—*Dr. Johnson.*

but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." But what a shame it is to make an exhibition of them!! What a miserable state of things which requires the same expedients for filling a chapel as for filling a playhouse! Here the name of a lady is paraded about the streets for the purpose of getting money, and for attracting a crowd. About the money this deponent sayeth not, but he does say that the crowd did not come; for though sister Shum is a lady of colour, that colour is not perfectly black; had it been so, the result would doubtlessly have been otherwise, and a multitude of admiring spectators, if not of attentive auditors, would have been gathered together on that interesting occasion.

At any rate I think a black skin, and especially a jet black skin, to be a great favourite with the religious public. It would, however, be extremely wrong for a preacher, like the Ethiopian serenaders, to black his face in order to obtain a greater amount of popular favor; yet if he were to do so, he would be acting far less criminally than the minister who should adorn himself in borrowed plumes by preaching other men's sermons *as though they were his own.** In the former case there would only be a painted fool, but in the latter case there would be a painted hypocrite—a man who virtually declares that God can be served, and that his people can be edified by means of trickery and falsehood. "I have heard," says

* "But are our preachers dealing honestly by us? We are not particular about the measure; but do they give us the real thing that is bargained for, the unmixed manufacture of their own loom? Do they vend the goods of another firm in their own name? Are they holy men as we take them to be, guilty of using false trade marks, and affixing their own labels to spurious import tons? In a word, do they always give us their own sermons?—*Manchester Examiner and Times.*

one, "such a preacher, and instead of joining in the plaudits of his eloquence, I have been disposed to walk up to him with earnest front, and say, 'Sir, you are a thief!'"

But here is another expedient:—"A sermon in words of one syllable, by a Manchester layman." How wonderful, say you, not only for a layman but for a Manchester layman, to out-do the regular clergy in producing a texture with a beautiful gloss from such meagre materials as words of one syllable! But stay! there is nothing wonderful in it, or at least nothing half so wonderful as it would be to produce a sermon in words of two syllables. Never mind the wonderfulness of it; but ask where is the propriety of it? Why string monosyllables together as a boy strings beads, and then attach them to Jesus Christ? What is this but to say that without some mummery or some amusement, or some play upon words, the gospel cannot interest the public mind? How different is this sentiment from that of the apostle, who said, he "was not sent to preach it with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."

In Mr. Fowler's shop window, you often see calico ticketed at 6d. a yard; but on becoming a purchaser you have to pay 6½d. a yard, the latter figure being so small as to elude your first observation. This is done on purpose, for,

> "This cunning Fowler who betrays
> Unguarded souls a thousand ways,"

is quite sure that you will not decline purchasing merely on account of a vulgar fraction. It is one of the tricks of trade. But the plan for drawing customers into a linen-draper's shop is sometimes resorted to for drawing poor perishing sinners, or

rather rich perishing sinners into the house of God. In the summer of 1860, the streets of Greenwich were largely placarded with the announcement that the celebrated *Mr. Neaniskos* would preach in Rival Street Tabernacle. Thither repaired a great multitude; but they soon found out that it was a *take in*, for who should ascend the pulpit but the father of *Mr. Neaniskos* instead of the young man himself. On looking at the bill more closely, they discovered that the words "the father of" had been slily introduced into it, as Mr. Fowler's ½d. had been slily introduced into the ticket about calico at 6d. a yard!

On Sunday evening, 3.3.'61, I was under the dome of St. Paul's, There was an immense multitude; but there was little or nothing to prove that the kingdom of God cometh not with observation or outward show; but there was every thing to remind me to the contrary; there was abundance of playing, chanting, and intoning. As the principal performers meet for rehearsal on the Saturday, they are generally well up in their parts for the Sunday evening service; and disguise it as you may, that service is little better than a musical performance; hence when the prayers are ended and the music is over, there is a general rush to the doors. Canon Dale may take his text, but as the amusement is gone, the people must go likewise. And what is the use of such immense gatherings? where is the mighty advantage to religion to empty the neighbouring churches and chapels in order that the people may be collected together in the cathedral of St. Paul? Mr. Child, I am ashamed of you if you think there is anything very spiritual in all this—if you think that mere singing men and singing women can give dignity to religion or acceptableness to the worship of God.

I have heard certain ecclesiastics bemoaning most piteously the sufferings of departed souls in purgatory, and, at the same time, begging for money most imploringly to get them out of it. But these men I could laugh to scorn, not for their religious belief, but for their religious hypocrisy, for there is scarcely a priest who does not believe with Cardinal Bellarmine, that it would take as many masses to get a soul out of purgatory, as it would take snowballs to heat an oven.

Now, Mr. Child, there is really some analogy between your mode of proceeding and that of these ecclesiastics. Not that you are hypocritical like them; no, I cannot say that; but you blaze forth that there will be a fancy fair—a bazaar—drums and fifes of the rifle corps—archery—photography, and other amusements, and that even the members of the quintett union will come up to "the help of the Lord against the mighty." But all these expedients having been tried, but with indifferent success, you publish abroad, as with the sound of a trumpet, that the right honourable Lord Tinman will preach on 6.2.'61. All honour, I say, to a peer or even to a peasant who shall preach the gospel for any of those holy purposes for which preaching was originally designed; but it is really contemptible for a catch-penny committee to get a noble lord to preach the gospel *merely* for the sake of getting money. Such a proceeding is something like a farce, because there is something ludicrous in it, something hollow in it, and something in it that is quite incompatible with the simplicity of Christ, and with the example of the primitive church.

Can you expect that men will believe that you resort to all these expedients for the good of the

church? that you care not for drums and fifes and fancy fairs, or even for my Lord This or my Lord That: but that all your care is for the cause of Christ? Or do you believe that the church can be benefitted by these things? Your reply is, that money must be got, and that you see no objection why the earth should not help the woman. Then why not get the earth to help the woman in some of its funnier moods and more popular entertainments? Why not go to Drury Lane, or to Covent Garden, and get up the "Merry Wives of Windsor" for the benefit of the Congregational church? You could scarcely say how wicked would be such a proceeding in comparison with the amusements of your fancy fair!

I know that you are reduced and almost driven to these questionable expedients by what are called chapel debts, than which nothing is more destructive to the interests of true religion. They prove that you have been running too fast; they make the minister a beggar, and the church of Christ a club. Better that you should meet anywhere, or even that you should meet nowhere, than that you should try to get up an appearance, or keep up an appearance, without any means, or without any adequate means of supporting it.

But here is something which for incongruity and outrageousness exceeds all that was ever done before in the same line. In this respect the Surrey Music Hall must yield the palm to the Music Hall in Store Street, though I think that the exhibition of the latter place was more unequivocal, and certainly more out-spoken than the exhibition of the former place. Here is a wonderful announcement:—

"Association for disseminating evangelical principles in a popular form. Orations will be delivered on Sunday evenings in

Store Street Music Hall. For the close of the year 1860, the subjects will be Lord Clive, Garibaldi, Vicar of Wakefield, Shylock, and Vanity Fair."

A large audience is assembled; after being kept the usual fashionable time for the commencement of the proceedings, the members of the association march from an antechamber into the place of meeting. The orator mounts the platform, on which he is a peripatetic during the whole time of his oration. But he begins with prayer and with reading the Bible, and both these exercises are gone through in a manner as tame and as passionless as can well be imagined. But these formal and preliminary exercises being finished, the speaker becomes more animated. The subject is "Vanity Fair." The oration is evidently cut and dried; it was delivered energetically, but somewhat slavishly, or in school-boy fashion, because it was delivered *memoriter*. First of all he complains of the *Saturday Review*, and tells the audience that if it had lashed them as it had lashed him, they would have lost their appetite for a week. After having first chastised, and then made game of his critics, he proceeds to enunciate a great number of anecdotes and laughable tales, very appropriate to the subject of "Vanity Fair;" but instead of quoting passages from the Bible, he quotes passages from Beau Brummell, Shakspeare, Lord Byron, Theodore Hook, &c. You may judge of the facetiousness of the whole when I tell you, that from the beginning to the end of the oration, the audience was convulsed with laughter, and that they gave vent to their feelings, in clapping of hands and in other demonstrations of noisy applause; showing how much they liked Punch in the Pulpit, and how much they desired that there might be a comic Bible, a comic religion, and a comic mode of preaching the gospel.

I have now said enough, and cited enough about the general opinion that some novelty or some kind of mummery must be called in to aid the cause of truth, and that without it the word of the Lord will never "have free course and be glorified." But my cases, say you, are exceptional. They are so, and I am glad of it; but they are on the increase, and may one day become the general rule. Now, Mr. Child, remember that religious baubles only glare and glitter for a moment; that God is a reality—that his service is a reality—and you ought to know that reality is the great want of the church. I don't mean that there is an utter want of it. Oh! no; but we want more of it. You have been told that this is an age of veneer, and it must be confessed that our sacred as well as our secular affairs are capable of being veneered; often exhibiting a beautiful exterior till some accident or some wear and tear reveal the worthlessness of the material lying underneath. Then we make the discovery that the beauty and the polish were all put on. But I must check myself. To be censorious is contrary to the feelings of a generous nature; but it is not contrary to those feelings, nor contrary to the dictates of Christian charity, to say that without truth and sincerity there can be no success in religion, and no just administration of the affairs of the kingdom of heaven.

LETTER IV.

PUNCH, A GOSPEL HERALD.

To Mr. Medley, not *formerly of Liverpool.*

I THINK it right to say that with you I have not the honour of a personal acquaintance. *In the present case* this may be considered rather advantageous than otherwise; because then it will appear as clear to others as it is already clear to myself, that in writing this letter I have no private wrong to redress, and no sinister end to obtain. I take it for granted that your desire is to do good, and that if in certain popular ministrations you have forsaken the old routine, you have not forsaken or lost sight of the great object which every minister of Christ should constantly keep in view. I think you are wrong, and egregiously wrong, in trying to promote that object by the introduction of anything like facetiousness or fun into your religious discourses; but I don't think that laughter is always mad, that mirth is always pernicious, or that the graceful levity of youth is always to be despised. The Jesuits never smile and never sing; and Dean Swift stubbornly resisted all tendency to laughter, wandering about "like a statue stepped from its pedestal to take the air." But a marble man or a solemn fool has no charms for me. I like genuine humour, but I like it in its place, not out of its place; and it is

always in this latter predicament when found in a religious assembly. In a political assembly, however, it often relieves the tediousness of debate, and introduces life and hilarity into what would otherwise be an unmitigated scene of yawning and of *ennui*.

In a certain place, not in the heavens, but on the earth, is seen a constellated firmament of living brightnesses; but among them there is not an equality of brightness. The Edinburgh star indeed is black; the Brighton star is white; the Kilkenny star is green; the Mayo star is brown; and the Birmingham star is always bright. But there was another luminary different from all these, and in some respects superior to all these. It was Henry Drummond. But it was not his holy orders, nor any of his ecclesiastical crotchets that made him a star of first magnitude. No, they only made him ridiculous. Apostle, prophet, angel, or Irvingite were only spots which, but for his intellectual brightness, would have obscured the excellences of his character. With all his vagaries, he was one of the most amusing and one of the most effective speakers of the day. How often would his wit, as by a flash of lightning, illumine the darkness and relieve the dulness of some unintelligible and interminable debate!

But he never spoke of religious subjects as he did of political subjects. No! he was not profane enough for that! and I am astonished beyond measure that you should be more profane than he! that you should make Punch a forerunner of Jesus Christ. I speak somewhat figuratively, but my meaning is this: for a text you announce some odd or whimsical expression, as a prelude to the consideration of most important truth. There ought

always to be some agreement or some congruity between the prelude and that which follows after. Of course then you say something about the author of your text—the inspiration of it—the different readings of it—and even the opinions of certain old women respecting it. Now you cannot go through such disquisitions without giving utterance to much that is nonsensical or absurd. Having disposed of Punch, you introduce Jesus Christ; but preceded by such a herald, he comes in with no grace, and is greeted with no rapturous applause; you have begun in the flesh, and you cannot end in the spirit. The feelings have been carried away by the laughter and the fun, and they cannot be recalled to the consideration of grave and solemn themes. They who listen to your discourse don't like the comedy first, and the tragedy afterwards; they may put on an air of seriousness in compliment to the preacher, but in that case the countenance is converted into a mask, to conceal, and not to make known, the feelings of the inner man.

Time was when low comedians caricatured ministers of the gospel upon the stage; but now ministers of the gospel erect a stage on which to caricature themselves. You put on a fool's cap to please the people, to conciliate their favour, or to compound with them for giving their attention to those truths, on the belief of which, and on the love of which, depend their everlasting all. You connect yourself, and what is worse, you connect Jesus Christ, with a "chip of the old block;" with "the great bottle trick;" with "give the devil his due;" with "positively the last night," and with many other clap trap announcements, equally ridiculous, equally out of place, and therefore equally opposed to the solemnity of religion.

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and to the service of God. But do you seriously believe that you can be full of fun, and full of the Holy Ghost, at the same time? or that by becoming a merry-Andrew you will become a more efficient minister of Jesus Christ?

Let me ask, what kind of conversions do you expect from such balderdash? or, how would you like *Miss Spatalosa* to give you the relation of her experience in the following terms, "Ah sir! never did I know my lost and ruined state, till I heard you upon 'a chip of the old block.' This at once touched my heart and opened my eyes. I had been polished up, but this only made me appear what I was not, for while my exterior was greatly admired, I knew that there was quite enough in the interior to prove my relationship with that queer old block from which I had been chipped off. I was then in great distress till I heard you on 'the great bottle trick;' then my spirit revived within me, and from that bottle I soon began to drink in consolation, as the ox drinketh in water. Before I heard you, I knew that I ought to pay everyone their debts; but still I had no clear notion that my obligations in this line extended even into the infernal world. But when you preached from 'give the devil his due,' some light was thrown upon the subject. I shall, however, want further instruction before I can become very proficient in this new department of Christian duty. But your 'positively the last night,' I positively shall never forget. My feelings became like the peaceful calm and the beautiful sunshine; but no description, however poetic, can properly come up to the reality. I shall therefore say no more than this, that I should like a great many more 'last nights.'"

I take it for granted that Mr. Medley is yet in the morning of life, and that through youth and inex-

perience he has been induced to play theological antics, and to revel in eccentric ways. But what can I say to those reverend men who praise him to the skies, and who almost seem to intimate that when he connected Christ with "a chip of the old block," a new era was inaugurated for the Christian faith; that the secret for recommending it to the million was found out, and that now we should have to sing, "Now *is* come salvation and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ!"

1. I am aware, Mr. Medley, that you say that the working classes who go to no church or to no chapel will not object to assemble on a sabbath day in a secular building to listen to some interesting discourse, if unconnected with singing, and praying, and the other formalities of a religious service. This is true; keep them out of harm's way; keep them from the public house; and from places of more questionable resort; and you do that which is worthy of all commendation. But then the question is, what is the entertainment to be provided on these occasions? That it should be moral, interesting, and useful, is clear; but that it should involve no trickery and no false pretence is equally clear. Do not, for the sake of getting at the masses, or for the sake of getting at anything else, expose religion to ridicule or contempt. Take wife beating, adulteration of food, tricks in trade, take any public calamity or any interesting event. But have no recourse to clap-trap announcements; despise the paltry artifice of giving out one subject with the view of lecturing upon another. And recollect that whatever subject is lectured upon, you may always make it appear that it is not only a very wicked thing, but that it is also a very unhealthy thing, and a very mean thing, and a very unprofitable thing, to be a

bad man. This would be a point gained, and gained, too, without compromising the honor of religion and the minister of Jesus Christ.

2. Is it the love of Christ which constrains you when you connect him with "the great bottle trick," or with any other trick? Is it possible that you can honor Christ by giving him a conjuror for his companion and a harlequin for his herald? Is it possible that by calling in the aid of buffoonery you can advance his kingdom in the world? Again I ask what can be your motive for these medley discourses? You reply, To exalt my master and not to exalt myself. Well, it is a very ignoble way of exalting the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords. I will not, however, deny that you really think you are exalting him; but then the heart is often deceived on this point. To young men, and even to old men, the applause of the crowd is a very fascinating thing. Few are proof against flattery: "lay it on," says Lord Chesterfield, "with a trowel, and some of it will be sure to stick." Nothing but the grace of God can make us indifferent to it, and make us seek the shade, and dread the incense of flattery and of popular applause.

3. In your clap-trap announcements there is a want of manliness; for this excellent quality always implies the absence of trickery and of false pretence. A man says what he means, and means what he says, What is really good needs no gilding to give it importance, and no puffing to give it currency in the world. Falsehood is skulking in its nature, but truth is above boards and without disguise; equivocation she avoids, and trickery she abhors. A conjuror might propose to preach Christ, in order to introduce "the great bottle trick." A preacher might announce 'the great bottle trick," in order to

preach Christ. In both cases there would be a want of manliness and of good faith. Our business must be done on our own premises, for if we do not succeed there, we shall never succed at all. Go where you please, but always quit yourself like a man; never appear otherwise than what you really are, and never say otherwise than what you really mean.

I know that your serio-comic course will cause a great crowd to run after you; but this should give you no satisfaction; for they who will run after a clown grinning through a horse-collar will always be the first to run after a minister who is weak enough to put on a fool's cap or a harlequin's coat. Be not ambitious to preach *à la* Punch; the very parties who urged you on, and who threw up their caps in token of joy at the excellency of your novel proceedings, now begin to be ashamed of them and to be ashamed of themselves for having defended them. I don't know that we have "positively the last night" of these performances; I am inclined to to think that the serpent is only scotched and not killed. I show unto you, Mr. Medley, a more excellent way; try to be a good man rather than to be a great man. It is not denied that there are great men in the religious world, as well as in all other worlds; but these never think themselves great, and never try to make themselves great. The men of the largest benevolence and of the smallest ostentation, are the princes of the earth, the giants of mankind, and the nobility of the kingdom of heaven.

LETTER V.

QUEER HYMNOLOGY.

To Mr. David.

YES! some of it is very queer, and no more fitted to bear our praises up to God than a paper kite is fitted to raise our bodies to the clouds! Here is a beautiful hymn! filled with scriptural allusions and with devotional sentiments; but it has no praise or thanksgiving in it! then you might just as well say, here is a beautiful well, so profound, so ornamental, and withal so easy of access, but it has no water in it! Now, as a well without water, or a cloud without rain, so is a hymn without praise. We have many such compositions, and we sing them more frequently than any other kind of hymns; but there can be no acceptable worship unless we sing with the heart, and with the understanding also. Now, what exercise can there be of the understanding in singing to sinners and to saints, to moral virtues and to Christian graces, and even to all kinds of things, instead of singing to God alone?

You often say to us:

> "Come let us join our cheerful songs,
> With angels round the throne;"

but really I don't see how, at least in many cases I can accept this invitation, for if the songs on

earth bear no resemblance to those in heaven, there can beno concord between human and angelic beings in this holy exercise. Besides, I should be as much ashamed to ask the angels to join me in singing some of our hymns, as I should be ashamed to invite them into a chapel where the whole service was nothing but a vain show.

Call my notion about our hymnology a crotchet if you please. I don't think it is one; it is, however, of little or of no consequence by what name my notion is designated. But I do maintain that no rule is of more obvious propriety than this: that in religious worship all our singing compositions should contain a direct address to the Supreme Being. In the compilation of the Congregational Hymn Book, your friend, Josiah Conder, was directed to give the preference to hymns of this kind. This was good, but it would have been better if he had been restricted to hymns of this kind. I am aware that if this were done, more than one half of your hymn-book would be laid aside from public worship. I do not say that it should be laid aside from private meditation, or even from public recitation. Some of your hymns should be marked as those to be said, and not to be sung. Very often a verse of a hymn appropriately introduced into a sermon is most impressive and most fitted to arrest the attention of the congregation.

That all our hymns should contain a direct address to the Supreme Being, is, I think, evident from the following considerations.

a. Is not God the only object of religious worship? Why then in singing do you address yourself to your fellow-creatures, to all manner of persons, and to all manner of things, instead of addressing yourself to Him alone?

b. Is not the devout feeling more likely to be called into exercise when you are singing *to* God, than when you are merely singing about Him, or about something relating to Him?

c. As an act of worship, is there not a considerable analogy between the ordinance of praise and that of prayer? Now would it not be truly alarming if in the latter exercise you were to exhort sinners, to define Christian virtues, to attempt beautiful descriptions of persons and of places? You see this would not be prayer at all! Why then should you do all this in singing, which is no less an act of worship, than the exercise of praying?

1. Why do you sing descriptive pieces? These are essays in rhyme; many of them are very pretty and worthy of being read, but not worthy of being sung, because there is no praise in them, or if there be, it is only indirect praise, and to sing them is certainly to worship God in a very round-about way. How can we look up to heaven, and adore God, with these hymns upon our lips?—

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire," &c.
"What is life! 'Tis but a vapour," &c.
"Faith is the brightest evidence," &c.
"Affliction is a stormy deep," &c.
"But few among the carnal wise," &c.
"Behold how sinners disagree," &c.
"Behold the wretch whose lust and wine," &c.

2. Why in singing do you try to enforce divine commands? You sing—

"Go, preach my gospel, saith the Lord," &c.
"Behold the potter and the clay," &c.
"Blow ye the trumpet, blow," &c.

Now I do not say that it is wrong to exhort the saints to preach the gospel, nor would it be wrong to exhort them to do so in the language of poetry; and if there should be any musical sinners who would like to have their duties set before them in a song, then by all means follow the example of Richard Weaver, and give out that you will sing to them, instead of saying to them what they must do to be saved. I don't mean exactly this; I don't mean that you are bound to become a singer of the gospel; but you might become so, without any glaring impropriety. But remember that you cannot sing to God and sing to men at the same time. You cannot say to men, "Blow ye the trumpet, blow," while you are worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

3. Why do you sing about your sorrows? How odd, yea, how unnatural is it to make what we complain of the subject of a song! What a contradiction! But we never do this withr egard to bodily pain. No, nature forbids it. No man under the process of amputation wishes to have his groans and cries set to music. With regard to the body we will have reality, but with regard to the soul we are contented to be put off with a sham. Do you think that God can approve of you, or that I can believe you while you sing—

"Our sins, alas; how strong they be," &c.
"How sad our state by nature is," &c.
"Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?" &c.
"Ah! wretched souls that strive," &c.
"Alas! what hourly dangers rise," &c.

No! I cannot believe you. I don't charge you with hypocrisy, but I do charge you with that inconsistency which nothing but a thoroughly artificial

state of things could ever have led you into. If you really feel the sorrow expressed in these hymns, give utterance to it by all means; weep over your sorrows, and pray over your sorrows, but never make a joyful noise over them: for this is an inconsistency that has no parallel, save in the wild and frantic ravings of the inmates of a mad-house.

4. Why, in worshipping God, do you address all manner of characters, and all manner of objects, both animate and inanimate? Might not a person unacquainted with our peculiarities say that we were worshipping them? I know you would say, Though we speak to them, yet we only desire to worship God. Then why, in the name of common sense, do you address these things at all while praising God? Where is the necessity for it? Why not in every act of praise call only on the name of the Lord? Is He not worthy of our supreme regard? But is it not supremely ridiculous to sing as praise to Him—

"Have you no words? Ah, think again," &c.
"Children in years and knowledge young," &c.
"Hasten, O sinner, to be wise," &c.
"Awake and mourn, ye heirs of hell!" &c.
"Kindred of Christ, for his dear sake," &c.
"Vital spark of heavenly flame," &c.
"Ye islands of the northern sea," &c.
"Ah! lovely appearance of death," &c.

5. Why do you sing about the doom of the wicked? With what apparent glee some will shout out—

"Like grass they flourish, till thy breath
Blast them in everlasting death."
"My thoughts on awful subjects roll;
Damnation and the dead," &c.
"There guilty ghosts of Adam's race,
Shriek out and howl beneath thy rod."

One would think that the persons who could sing these hymns could have no reason in them, no humanity in them, and no religion in them. I am sure, Mr. David, that if you properly reflected on these awful compositions, you would be more disposed to weep than to sing. Singing, in its very nature, is indicative of joy: a foolish custom makes you sing about the horrors of the damned; but you feel no joy in doing so, and you mean no harm in doing so. Ah! there it is; in this exercise there is no meaning, and consequently no consciousness of singing in a manner which is acceptable and well-pleasing to God.

6. How can you lift up your voice to heaven and sing as follows:—

> "Then trust me, and fear not, thy life is secure," &c.
> "In love I correct thee, thy soul to refine," &c.
> "Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismay'd,
> I, I am thy God, and will still give aid," &c.

You know that these are God's words to his people: but with what propriety can you make them the people's song to God? If you say that you don't sing them to God, then to whom do you sing them? Who is the object of your adoration? If you say that you have no particular object of worship, then you avow that yours is no reasonable service, and that you have no desire to "sing with the spirit and with the understanding also!"

Our hymn books have long been disfigured by anomalies like these. Some of our metrical compositions are truly scriptural and truly poetical, but they are truly unfitted for public worship, for this simple reason, that they have no ascription of praise in them. I know that many good men will persist in singing such unsuitable, and at the same time, such

unpoetical lines as these: "*Have you no words? ah! think again;*" and I know that it will be said that their opinion is as good as mine. Be it so; while I could not concede infallibility to them, I would not claim infallibility for myself. I only wish you, Mr. David, to "consider what I say; and the Lord give you understanding in all things."

A word or two upon the mal-appropriation of this sacred exercise. I understand you had a most delightful party the other evening, and that you called in Dr. Watts merely for the purpose of aiding your amusements. Never do this again; it is decidedly wrong. I can assure you that on such occasions it would be more consistent with religion to sing "Polly Hopkins," or "Pop goes the weazel," than it would be to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Set your face as a flint against the profane custom of amusing yourselves under the pretext of singing praises to God and to the Lamb.

As you should never sing hymns for amusement, so you should never sing them for the purpose of quelling a disturbance; yet this is too often done. Mr. Palmer, of London, was once preaching in your chapel about the dying thief; suddenly a tremendous noise is heard; it was of an unearthly sound, unlike anything ever heard before. The minister really jumps over the pulpit door, and the skirts of his gown are seen flying in the air—the noise continues—the men rise up—the women scream and faint away—there is a rush to the windows and to the doors, and all try to escape for their lives. As is usual in such cases, "then were they in great fear where no fear was." It was found that the main-spring of the chapel clock had given way, making all the works run round in more than double

quick time, and making also a horrible noise, till they came to the end of their mad career.

This was before you were born, but one of your predecessors, in order to quiet the people, gave out, "*Praise God from whom all blessings flow,*" as though a panic, with all its fearful consequences, was to be considered as a special blessing, and calling for an immediate song of thanksgiving and praise. But if there were no inappropriateness in the words, don't you see that to sing thus on such an occasion is a robbery? A doxology belongs to God alone. Why, then, do you make use of it to drown a noise, or to quell the fears of an affrighted people? But you say, "Music hath charms to soothe the savage beasts;" so it has; and music may not be inappropriately introduced to allay the passions agitated by some groundless fear; but don't sing in this case, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." Rather sing, "Rule Britannia," or "See the Conquering Hero comes," or sing any popular air that will involve no profanity and no burlesque upon the worship of God.

So lately as 21.10.'60, I was a witness to an impropriety of this kind. Surrey Chapel is crowded to excess. The esteemed minister, Newman Hall, ascends the pulpit and says, "I see a number of persons standing; let us make some effort to give them seats; but while this effort is being made, we will sing, 'From all that dwell below the skies.'" Now, it is really a poor compliment to the Almighty to make use of His praise for such a purpose; and it is a sad thing to make a common hack of most sacred words in order to divert the attention of the people. It would have been better to have called upon the organist to have played a good voluntary while the work of arranging the people was going on.

In conclusion, I would advise you by all means to assign to each hymn its own proper tune. This is done in the French Church; and in every Church it would be a considerable aid to congregational singing, and would also save a great deal of anxiety, indecision, and irreverent behaviour in the house of God. In that holy place to which we desire that our songs should ascend, it is of no consequence whether we sing scientifically or not; but still, if your musical friends wish to sing scientifically, and to sing devotionally at the same time, let them have their hymn books interleaved, so that they may have the tune in close proximity with the hymn to be sung. At any rate, I don't think the angels like to see them holding a tune-book in one hand and a hymn-book in the other, while singing the praises of God.

In giving to each hymn its appropriate tune the soundest judgment must be exercised, otherwise we shall fall into many improprieties of a grievous or even of a laughable character. Of this I could give you many examples. I could tell about "poor poll;" but I will confine myself to one which occurred at the Adelphi Chapel, London, when I was a boy. In the absence of Mr. Goodlad, the organist, a stranger supplies his place; Mr. Mears, the clerk, sends up to him the hymn, "*With joy we meditate the grace,*" to be sung after the sermon. Unfortunately the organist fixes upon the tune called "Miles' Lane." The consequence was, that instead of singing and repeating "*crown him,*" all the members of the choir scream out *bow-els* C C, *bow-els* E E, *bow-els* G G. Of course, I don't expect that anything so gross as this would take place again; but without great care you will fall into numerous mistakes unless you make the music appropriate to the song.

Perhaps, after all, you will ask what is the use of strictures like these? O, remember that every thing connected with the worship of God is solemn and important in the last degree; and if it is not honestly done—if it is not spiritually done—it is worse than if it were never done at all. We often complain of the low and lukewarm state of the church; but who can tell how much that state is to be attributed to the unreal and even culpable manner in which this service is performed? "Now this I speak for your own profit, not that I may cast a snare upon you but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction."

LETTER VI.

SURREY MUSIC HALL.

To Mr. Friend, of Bath.

THIS magnificent building was, as you well know, one of the greatest Sunday novelties of the metropolis. Thither resorted a great multitude, consisting principally of what are called the middle classes, with a slight sprinkling of some beneath them, and likewise of some above them. This popularity of the Music Hall was not much to be wondered at. Convert any place of public amusement into a place of public worship, and many will desert their own chapels in favour of this novel method of religious improvement, and of preparation for an eternal world. But, besides this, there is in London, as in Bath, and other places, a great Athenian crowd who "spend their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." These form a kind of floating mass attached to no particular place, and bound for no particular port; but carried about, hither and thither, with every wind of doctrine, and always carried into those places where are exhibited the most surprising novelties of the age. In the Music Hall there was much that was unusual and out of the way. Admission by tickets,—a preaching at once histrionic and hyper-calvinistic, and above all, that remarkable youth who, in a short time, had

become so distinguished as to carry off the prize of popularity from all the most celebrated preachers of the day. These were some of the circumstances which excited public curiosity, and rendered the Surrey Music Hall so attractive in the religious world.

In my opinion, there was in it more of earth than of heaven, and more that was fitted to pander to an idle curiosity than to promote those holy purposes for which preaching was instituted, and for which we should assemble together in the name of the Lord. You will be better able to judge of the correctness of that opinion by a narrative of what I witnessed at one of these religious exhibitions. It is Sunday morning; numbers of people are wending their way to the sacred spot. Presently there is a great crowd before the garden gates, consisting of holders of five shilling tickets, holders of one shilling tickets, and holders of no tickets at all. While waiting for admission a great deal of animated conversation is going on. The merits of the preacher are discussed; odious comparisons are instituted, and much loose talk is indulged in; showing how much certain parties need improvement with regard to the government of the tongue.

At length the ticket-holders are admitted; policemen and other officials are stationed at different parts of the gardens to prevent disqualified sinners from entering the sacred edifice. After the lapse of a quarter of an hour the gates are thrown open to the general public, who have no passport from the constituted authorities for an earlier admission. The gardens present an animated appearance; there the people, as in an ordinary exhibition, are running helter-skelter, all anxious to secure some vacant seat, or to stand in some vacant place. Not the

most spiritual, but the most nimble, get themselves most comfortably disposed of, while the old and the feeble come but poorly off.

Now the beautiful edifice becomes animated enough to make the brow of melancholy wear a smile. The three tiers of galleries, the seats below, and all the space below are alive with human beings; some have their hats on, some have their hats off; all are laughing, talking, or in some way or other contributing to the general liveliness of the scene. The hour for the religious service has not yet arrived; but in the mean time an official comes out of the vestry laden with sermons, and selling them to the congregation at a penny apiece. I did not see it, but I have been credibly informed, that admission tickets were sold in a similar manner. But while the church is thus making the hall a place of merchandize, I am bound to say that I saw no orange girls plying their trade among the crowd. If they had done so, the church would have been shocked at their wickedness, and the police would have turned them out. But at present we have no well graduated scale to show how much more culpable it is to sell fruit than to sell tickets or pamphlets on the sabbath day. As it is, perhaps, the vendors of the former might say to the vendors of the latter, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in my eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"

But suddenly the business of buying and selling is suspended, the din of conversation is hushed; something unusual has taken place; there is whispering, there is the interchange of significant looks, there is pointing with the finger, till at length all eyes are directed to one particular spot, for now it is as clear as the noonday that my lord This, and my lady That, have taken their seats on the platform.

Now an air of satisfaction pervades the assembly, now it is thought that dissent is looking up, or that some important event has taken place in that kingdom which is not of this world, and which cometh not with observation, or with outward show.

The sermon was of the serio-comic kind; it produced smiling, tittering, and now and then a loud laugh. The divinity of it was more in accordance with the writings of Dr. Crisp, or of Dr. Hawker, than with the writings of the New Testament. Indeed, in many respects, the sermon was, I think, in direct opposition to our Lord's sermon on the mount. The preacher of the Music Hall often speaks with approbation of those who are considered to be Antinomian divines. I will not however deny that on this occasion there was the pleasing and energetic utterance of many good things; but upon the whole, it seemed only a semi-religious service, highly gratifying to those who thirst after excitement as the drunkard thirsts after brandy or gin. I felt that pathos was wanting, that reverence was wanting, and that almost everything was wanting to make the music hall the house of God, and the gate of heaven. At the close of the sermon, the want of money was complained of from the pulpit, and the money boxes were rattled most energetically at the doors while the congregation was going out. It will be said that such a vast multitude could not be brought together without considerable expense; true: but then there is a previous question: why create the necessity for such loud and lasting appeals for pecuniary support? These appeals add nothing to the sublimity of the gospel, and nothing to the dignity or efficiency of him who proclaims it.

I was very much struck with the resemblance

between the preacher of the Surrey Gardens, and the preacher of the Surrey Tabernacle. It is true that one is in the morning of life, and that the other is in the evening of life. The voice of one is clear as a bell, and the voice of the other is husky as a bagpipe. It is also true, that one nicknames the other a duty-faith man, and calls duty-faith one of the mysteries of hell. But with these exceptions, the resemblance between them is very striking. I believe that both are kind and amiable men, and that in this respect they rise above their creed.* Both belong to the Hyper school, where arrogance is always exhibited, and humility is seldom taught. Both have some gold, but also a more than usual quantity of brass. Both deal very largely in that mawkish thing called spiritualizing. Both seem to read the Bible through Antinomian spectacles. Both can "snatch a grace beyond the rules of art," for in the presence of the congregation one tried to crow like a cock,† and the other tried to roar like a lion.‡ Neither seem to regard the following admonition: "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be patient to all men, apt

* Some men are only professionally abusive. Witness the courts of law and the high court of Parliament; the same thing is not entirely unknown among the professional antics of sectarianism. I once heard the late Mr. Cooper, of Dublin, speak of a rencontre between the priest and the Rev. Peter Roe, of Kilkenny, when the following dialogue took place:—

Peter Roe. Good morning, your reverence.

Priest. I hear that you have been speaking against me from your pulpit.

Peter Roe. I can't deny having done something of the kind.

Priest. Ah, very well! and I have been cursing you from the altar; but never mind, my good fellow; we must do these things, you know. Good morning.

† See letter xxi.

‡ Among other places this roaring was made at Wandsworth for the benefit of the Surrey mission.

to teach, forbearing in meekness, instructing those who oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth." It is likewise a singular coincidence that in the Surrey Tabernacle, as well as in the Surrey Music Hall, the sermons of the preacher were sold on the Sabbath day!

The service at the Music Hall was abandoned 12.'59. In my opinion this was a circumstance not to be regretted. He must have been a very weak man who could think that religion was wounded, or that the Holy Spirit was grieved, by the shutting up of the Surrey Music Hall. But the reason put forth for this shutting up appears insufficient. It was said that in consequence of the proprietors having determined to let the place for the performance of *sacred* music in the evening, it would be wrong to have preaching there in the morning. But in the morning there was certainly amusement mingled with religion; and in the evening it was proposed to mingle religion with amusement. In both cases the association is utterly wrong; but supposing that there was no solemnity in one service, and no want of it in the other service, the amusement of the evening could not neutralize the religion of the morning. At any rate, there is no wickedness in bricks and mortar, and no power in any building to interrupt the communion between the Almighty, and those who "worship him in spirit and in truth."

LETTER VII.

ANNUS MIRABILIS, 1867.

To Miss Croaker, of Gloomy Vale, near Pantachou.

You told me some years ago that your friend Mr. Timor had determined on selling off his stock-in-trade, on girding up his loins, and on putting his house in order that he might be better prepared for the close of the present dispensation, for the coming of Christ, and for the end of the world. You know that Mr. George Robins was brought down from London to sell Mr. Timor's immense stock of wines, without delay and without reserve. I was present at that sale, and I well remember that the auctioneer paid a well-merited compliment to the uprightness of Mr. Timor's character. "A more honest man," said he, "I never met with; he has really given me instructions with regard to some of these wines which are manifestly to his own disadvantage. I scarcely ever knew of such a case before." Mr. Robins was so accustomed to speak professionally that I fear this eulogium was not so well received, as it otherwise might have been. I was rather deeply interested in the circumstances which led to this sale. I need not more particularly refer to them now: but when the auctioneer was told that all this sacrifice of property and breaking up of Mr. Timor's establishment took place on account of the speedy coming of

Christ, he shrugged his shoulders, and said his friend must be a little mad, or a little too good for this present evil world. I know you will say that George Robins was no good authority on the subject of unfulfilled prophecy, and no good judge of subjects connected with speculative theology. I know that he was not; but then, I told you at the time, "then was Mr. Timor in great fear where no fear was." And so it proved to be. I told you also that the ministry that was always harping on unfulfilled prophecy,* making the learned stare, and the unlearned to tremble, and to sell off all their goods, was nothing better than the vapourings of judicial astrology, or the ministry which may be fairly designated as "Punch in the pulpit."

Unadmonished by previous failures, the *soi-disant* prophets are still blowing the trumpet in Zion, and sounding the alarm. There is not a blazing comet, not an earthquake, not a disaster by sea or land, not a "pestilence that walketh in darkness," nor a "destruction that wasteth at noon-day," not a battle fought nor a victory won, not a change in government, and scarcely a political event that is not either a fulfilment of prophecy or the precursor of events which are shortly to come to pass. "The curfew tolls the knell of parting day;" but your friends toll the knell of a departing world. But why should they be so anxious to bring it to an end? What can this anxiety be but a mark of insanity? Whatever you may think, to the contrary, Miss Croaker, our existence is a very interesting one, and our world is a very beautiful one. We may live very comfort-

* I have heard of a congregation at Wallingford who heartily wished that the Jews had got back to their own country, because their minister was so anxious about it that he could think and talk of nothing else!

ably in it, and even find in it a heaven upon earth, providing we have "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

You remember Edward Irving; he was a great friend to all the branches of your family; indeed some of its members would have died of inanition, but for his untiring efforts to nourish them, and to keep them alive. Your friend Mr. Timor would have lost his fear, and his cousin Mr. Tremor would have lost his trembling, but for him. I do not say that your family was the only object of his solicitude; oh, no; no man was ever more ready to feed the poor, or to do good to all mankind; but he always had on hand a most abundant supply of that peculiar aliment so essential not only to the well-being, but to the very existence of the Croaker family throughout the habitable globe.

Charles the Twelfth was a great warrior, but being rather a fire-brand than a luminary, he made great havoc of the lives and liberties of mankind, and gained no advantage to his country, and conferred no blessings upon the kingdoms of the earth. So your Edward Irving, though a great theologian, was like a fiery meteor, who blazed for a little time, and then suddenly went out, leaving behind him no rays of heavenly light to guide the church, or to illumine the world. His tongues have ceased, his prophecies have failed, and *his* knowledge has vanished away.

But his vagaries have not vanished away; they are still perpetuated by certain individuals, who seem to act as madmen on subjects connected with prophecy. Like the town-crier ringing his bell to secure attention, so they make a great noise in proclaiming the second advent, the return of the Jews, the fulness of the Gentiles, and all the dreadful things which are to come to pass. I would not cite

them before the civil magistrate, as fortune-tellers, because I could not prove them to be guilty of getting money, of getting popularity, or of getting anything else under false pretences; but I do cite them before the tribunal of public opinion, and there I charge them with giving out false notices, and of raising false alarms, to the great dishonour of our sovereign Lord, His crown, and dignity. How fearfully wrong was the converted Jew, when thirty years ago he said, loud enough for all the world to hear, "The Son of man will come to Jerusalem in 1847; and I, Joseph Wolfe, shall see, with mine own eyes, Jesus and all the prophets, where I am writing these lines."

No good man will wantonly cry out "The wolf! the wolf!" but he may foolishly or inconsiderately do so, and then simple-minded people, if not frightened out of their wits, will be frightened out of their sobriety and peace of mind. "Listening to the imaginary peals of mystic thunders, they would become deaf to the voice of duty and of common sense." Only let such a man as Dr. Whiston raise this cry, and his flock would begin to tremble. They would say, "Our dear doctor can see a great deal where ordinary men can see nothing! We know there have been many false alarms, but really now the wolf is coming at last!" This cry was raised in 1847, and some men who ought to have known better, were so unpolite and ill-behaved as to placard the metropolis with the dreadful announcement that the world was to be destroyed on the 31st of March, 1847.

That event, I can assure you, did not come to pass. That 31st of March came in and went out as regularly, and as well-behaved, as any of its predecessors; and when it was succeeded, as usual, by the 1st of April, then it was discovered that these students of

prophecy had not tried to make fools of others; but they had really succeeded in making fools of themselves. And it is no inconsiderable proof of their *simple* piety that when, to their great dismay, the world was still going on in spite of their predictions to the contrary, they set themselves to find out the cause of their mistake; and they soon discovered that they had ante-dated the end of the world by a whole year. But still bent upon its destruction, and still enamoured with the hob-goblin argument, they informed the public through the medium of the daily papers, that what had failed in March, 1847, would surely come to pass in March, 1848!

Ah! say you, the prophetic school is not so rash in the present day. I don't know that. It was only last October, 1860, that the Manchester Free Trade Hall exhibited a most sorry spectacle on the subject of unfulfilled prophecy! There was assembled a numerous and respectable audience, before which stood Dr. Cumming, more like a religious fortune-teller, than a Christian divine. Not only did he lay down the law about Jews, Turks, and Infidels—about the central fire of the globe, about the downfall of kingdoms, and the destruction of the world; but he really affirmed that Tarshish meant Great Britain, that vessels of bulrushes meant steam-ships, and that swift beasts meant steam-carriages; that the sick man, which in political cant, means the Turkish empire, was dying fast, and that the Hebrew word *hoi* in the 18th of Isaiah, should be rendered *ho*, and not woe,—a sense which is not only contrary to the general tenor of the chapter, but also contrary to the LXX, and contrary to the general meaning of the word in the Hebrew Bible. Dr. Cumming complains very loudly of scoffers; but he seems to forget that

it is one thing to scoff at the word of prophecy, and that it is quite another thing to scoff at his burlesque interpretation of it.

Now, 1867 is singled out as the great prophetic year. Well, I have no doubt that that year may be distinguished by some remarkable events, because remarkable events are so very common in the present age. But beyond this, the present deponent sayeth not; and I rather suspect that your friend knows as much about 1867, as Dr. Wolfe did about 1847; and I am quite sure that they ought not to pretend to know the times aud the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But they who deal most largely in prophetic novelties, and in abstruse calculations, are those whom you delight to honour; you ought not however to honour them for these things, for there is no better friend of the papacy than the man who confidently predicts the time of its downfall; and there is no better friend to infidelity than the man who makes his interpretation of the Bible of equal authority with the Bible itself; because if his prophecy fail, the Papists will say that Protestants do not understand the Bible, and Infidels will say that the Bible is not true.

Much is said about the signs of the times, but this is a kind of vague expression, whose meaning lies at the mercy of those who choose to make use of it. Sometimes a weak brother has got hold of a particular crotchet, and he thinks of it, and talks of it, in such a manner, as though the state of things would never be considerably improved till all the world should fall in love with his notion about it; and many do fall in love with it, and then he calls it one of the signs of the times; whereas it may only be a sign that he is a little cracked, or that he thinks rather differently from the rest of mankind on the subject.

On certain occasions we are all prone to cry out that "there is nothing like leather." Well, for some purposes there is nothing like leather, but if we think it to be good for every purpose, we must be mad men, or, at least, men deprived of common sense.

Of this propensity to cry out, that "there is nothing like leather," I had recently a very curious, but at the same time a very melancholy, example. On the 11.11.'60, I was at the Chapel, Crown Court, Covent Garden; the Rev. Mr. Locumtenens was in the pulpit expounding our Lord's sermon on the mount. "Now," said he, "there are not eight beatitudes as is generally supposed, but only seven; what is considered the eighth is, 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake.' But," said the preacher, "as persecution is only an accidental circumstance in the christian life, this must be put out of the list of the beatitudes." Then he triumphantly exclaimed, "We have in this sermon, a recognition of the sacred number, *seven*."

The preacher seemed as pleased as a child with a rattle or a toy, and began to repeat with great energy the septenary texts about seven stars, the seven spirits, the seven times, the seven years, &c. "There is," said he, "something sacred in the number 12, and in the numbers 3 and 4; and be it remembered that 3 and 4 make seven; so that the number seven, has the pre-eminence; it means indeed God's covenant: for in Gen. xxi. 31, we read of *Beersheba* translated the well of the oath; but which should have been translated, 'the well of *seven*.'"

But Mr. Locumtenens is wrong; for though in the Hebrew *without the points*, the word for *oath* is the same as the word for *seven*, yet the connection of the passage in Gen. xxi. 31, clearly shows that the common rendering is the correct one. But more

convincing still, in that wonderful and venerable translation of the Bible called the *Seventy*, the word in Gen. xxi. 31, is rendered *Horksmos*, which not only signifies the word *oath*, but which signifies nothing else but the word *oath*. Neither in sound nor sense, has it the slightest resemblance to *hepta*, which is the Greek word for the number seven.

But to proceed: you cannot ask, how it is that good men can speak so accurately of what is to come to pass, for you know that they speak very inaccurately concerning it. And it is important to observe that of some recent events surprising enough to astound the world, they never spoke at all till after these events had taken place; but you may ask, why do they speak so confidently of what is in the future? what is the ground of their prediction or the basis of their calculations? For this they have no other support than what is called the year-day theory; but this, if examined into, will be found to be nothing but a foundation of sand. The Rev. Mr. Lincoln, in his sermons on the Second Advent, says: "we have the authority of God himself, for saying that in prophetic language, a day means a year." The text he refers to is this: "I have appointed *thee* each day for a year." Ezekiel iv. 6. But in this text each day is appointed not to mean a year, but to represent a year. If this text means what Mr. L. says it does, namely, that in prophetic language a day *always* means a year, we should be involved in inextricable difficulties and contradictions. For example, Jonah prophesied, "In forty days Nineveh shall be overthrown." Mr. Lincoln's theory is, that in forty years it shall be overthrown. Jesus prophesied, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Mr. Lincoln's theory is, "In three years I will raise it up;" for

he states it as a general truth, that in prophetic language, a day means a year.

Now, to draw general conclusions from particular premises or exceptional cases, is one of the most fruitful sources of error with which we are acquainted. If Ezekiel was commanded to lie on his left side 390 days, and on his right side 40 days, it does not follow that we are to do the same. And if God appointed Ezekiel a day for a year, it does not follow that he appointed this mode of calculation to be observed as a general law. And if Elijah commanded fire to come down from heaven, it does not follow that James and John ought also to have commanded fire to come down from heaven, especially for the purpose for which they desired it.

Like all the ministers of the Hyper, or of the Millenarian school, Mr. Lincoln is very fanciful and very political in his prophetic interpretations. For instance; he says, from the situation of Cherbourg, and the fortifications of Cherbourg, he is led to the conclusion that the time of man's rule is nearly expired! Because three frogs are the ancient arms of France, he thinks that country must be alluded to in the Revelation, where it is written, "And I saw three unclean spirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon." And this passage, "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus," he thinks has an allusion to the French guillotine, not reflecting that the imagery of this book is borrowed from the historical events of the Old Testament. I am unwilling to believe that Mr. Lincoln is a weak minded man: yet I cannot tell what to make of these gloomy thoughts and glaring absurdities.*

* The man, who, with feeble judgment and excitable imagination, is constantly catching at political intelligence, apocalypse in hand, walks on the verge of insanity, or worse, of infidelity. *Nat. Hist. of Enthusiasm.*

They are, I believe, a fair specimen of the Millenarian theology, and of that kind of stuff which makes men so very popular in the present day.

But don't be alarmed by the vagaries of the prophetic school. That school is not composed of knaves and fools, but it is composed of many weak minded men, and of men who only take a one-sided view of the word of God. You were once very much frightened by a pamphlet called "The Coming Struggle." I told you at the time that there was nothing in it; I don't mean that there was nothing in it of bold assertion, but that there was nothing in it to prove that the present order of things was about to break up, and to pass away. But you would not believe me, and not only so, but you even threw out hints about scoffers, who should come in these last days, and you did not say that I was not one of them! Now you have the *Coming Tribulation* to alarm you, but don't be alarmed by it. It is only a kind of scarecrow to amuse the world, and to frighten the dear people of God. The Millenarian, like the papal school, delights in gloomy apprehensions, and in hobgoblin arguments on the subject of religion. But mine is not a mere negative theology. I have something that is really delightfully positive, something that has done me good, and that will do you good, something that is a remedy for all the present and future ills of life. It is this: be truly religious, do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God; then no moving of the earth, no shaking of the mountains, no roaring of the waters, no drying up of the river Euphrates, no battle of Armageddon, no political event, and even no possible event, shall ever make thee ashamed or confounded, world without end, Amen.

But one word more. I don't say that you ought not to read the book of the Revelation. No, for blessed are they who *do* read it. But don't read it with a view of surprising the world, by visionary notions and startling predictions about the coming of Christ, and the end of all things. Mind, I do not say that you should be selfish, and that you should have no pity on Jews, Turks, and Infidels. Oh no; feel for all the world, pray for all the world, and do good to all the world. Wars, and rumours of wars, always have been, and perhaps always will be, until the present order of things shall have passed away. But remember the words of our Lord, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."* Don't be more anxious about any "coming struggle," than about the present struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil. Don't be more anxious to know what is to become of the Jew or the Turk, than what is to become of yourself. Don't be more anxious to hear a lecture on prophecy, than to hear a lecture on Christian charity, for though you had the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries, and all knowledge, yet without charity you would be nothing better than a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

* But, if we look abroad, and bring into one day's thoughts, the evil of many, certain and uncertain, what will be, and what will never be, our load will be as intolerable as it is unreasonable. —*Jeremy Taylor.*

LETTER VIII.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE.

To Mr. Peacock, of the Grand Parade.

I KNOW that you like the plaudits of the multitude; but this disposition more frequently than otherwise leads men into false positions, and sometimes even into folly's dangerous ways. You are not the minister of the Tabernacle, but you are the patron of it; and often with feelings of exultation you speak of its spaciousness and of its grandeur. I wish to show that this is one of those cases in which you should rejoice with trembling, and that the neighbourhood of the Elephant and Castle is not the only spot where may be found the house of God and the gate of heaven. About the immensity of your new tabernacle there can be no dispute; as the elephant is superior to other quadrupeds, and as your neighbour's great shoe warehouse is superior to a cobler's stall, so is your chapel superior to those with which it is surrounded. It is not, however, the largest, nor the grandest, Nonconformist place of worship in the metropolis. Bloomsbury can boast of one that is superior to it in ecclesiastical and architectural magnificence. But let that pass. I wish to call your attention to something of graver import than the material qualities of the building. You know that the opening of it took place 20.8.'60; or rather

that a kind of preliminary opening of it took place at that time; for after the service was over, the building seemed to be left in that state which is somewhat analogous to the state of a child who is only half baptized. In that service there was diversion mingled with devotion, and a grand manifestation of that state of things which I venture to designate as "Punch in the pulpit."

The published accounts of it differ in some slight degree from each other, but all agree in the following particulars, namely:—that the price of admission was five shillings; that there were singing and praying; that certain skittish and censorious speeches were made reflecting on the heterodox ministry of the day, and especially in the neighbourhood of the Metropolitan Tabernacle; that in a discourse narrating the events of a continental tour, there was much laughable vituperation of Napoleon, as though, for the fun of the thing, it were noble to indulge in irritating topics which might endanger the friendly relations between England and France; that certain poor Irish emigrants were not fit to be cut up into mops, and that all their luggage might be wrapt up in a pocket handkerchief; that ridiculous stories were told about the Virgin Mary; that there was a Holywell Street near the cathedral at Antwerp similar to the Holywell Street near St. Clement Dane's, Strand; that Cologne was not distinguished for savory smells; that there was more talk about what was political than what was evangelical; and more than all, and above all, that these remarks were accompanied with roars of laughter and with thunders of applause.

Now mind, Mr. Peacock, I am not saying that it is wrong to give an *amusing* description of a continental tour, for without amusement it would gene-

rally be more insipid than veal pie without pepper and salt. Indeed, I am always disposed to say to every caterer of public instruction, as Isaac said to Esau, "Make me savoury meat, such as I love;" that is, not only say what is good, but say it with all the raciness and with all the pleasantness that the subject will admit of, or that your resources can supply. This will wonderfully aid the mental digestion, and procure for your instruction an easy entrance and a permanent abode in the popular mind. But it is wrong to mingle amusement with religion; it is wrong to join roars of laughter with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; it is wrong to say *that* in a chapel which would have boen received with uproarious merriment in a public house; it is wrong for young men and maidens to be pleased with these things; but for Charles and William and John, and other venerable men, to be pleased with them, is really intolerable. At that meeting, they seemed as pleased, as though on account of so much masonry, and sculpture, and architecture, so much facetiousness, and so much clever vituperation, some great event had taken place enough to make angels sing and devils tremble.

The second opening took place 4.'61, and extended over a number of weeks, correspondent to the number of points in dispute between Calvinists and Arminians. On this occasion there was a plentiful supply of the same kind of balderdash which was so profusely dealt out on the first opening; the dish, however, containing the "five points," was not well received. There were many wry faces, many signs of uneasiness, and many departures from the chapel, while they were being discussed. Say what you will, dry, hard theology has no charms for the multitude. They must have something fanciful, or something

facetious mingled with the truth as it is in Jesus, to make it palatable or worthy their acceptation.

A monster place of worship, like all other monstrosities, is of very doubtful propriety; indeed, monsters should not be permitted to live. You know that Dr. Whiston speaks a great deal about the signs of the times, and perhaps one of these signs is a desire to take the world by surprise, and to out-do all that was ever done before in the same line. The Great Eastern is an example of this; it is indeed a monument of human genius, but it is also a monument of human vanity, or of something not necessarily connected with the interests of commerce, or with the improvement of navigation. After swallowing up enormous wealth, after causing intense anxiety and loss of life, what is now the result? It is this: while ordinary steamers are going triumphantly from sea to sea, and from shore to shore, this extraordinary one, this iron monster, is for a considerable time laid up on a gridiron, to be cooked up afresh, that it may be rendered more fit for use, and become better qualified to satisfy the cravings of hungry and discontented shareholders.

The Great Eastern is like Captain Gulliver among the Lilliputians: this people sent for the captain, but they found him such an unwieldly, and consequently such an unwelcome guest, that they soon wanted to get rid of him. Such a mountain of flesh and blood they had never seen before; they had no house large enough to hold him, and no provision ample enough to sustain him. By means of ladders, ropes, and pullies, they tried to establish friendly relations with his person, but all in vain; and at length, fearing that they might be swallowed up, or trodden down, or in some way or other tried beyond the power of endurance, they requested his permis-

sion to cut him up into small pieces, or if he was determined on retaining his integrity, they requested him to pass on to some other sphere more suited to his voracious appetite, and altogether more in accordance with the circumstances and necessities of his gigantic nature.

Take another example: certain parties projected a "Dial," which was to exceed in magnificence every other dial of a similar kind. Its face was to shine so beautifully, and its hands were to move so regularly, that it was to become the illuminator and the regulator of no inconsiderable part of mankind. Thus for years the trumpet sounded, and the mountain laboured, but all of a sudden it brought forth a mouse, or something very trivial, in comparison of what was expected. So hard is it to set the Thames on fire, or to do anything, which for real usefulness, shall far exceed all that was ever done before of a similar kind.

Not long ago, Big Ben, of Westminster, gave out, if not a sweeter, yet a louder sound than any other bell in the metropolis: but his noisy triumph was of short duration; indeed, his very loudness contributed to his untimely end, for the means made use of to produce it, caused the bell to crack; then nobody cared to hear him again, and nobody cared anything about him except to wish for his dissolution as speedily as possible!

Now a monster chapel must be placed in the same category with a monster ship, a monster newspaper, or a monster bell.

1. All monsters are expensive. Nature or art goes out of its way to produce them, and we must go out of our way to maintain them. And what expenses does a chapel of gigantic dimensions necessarily involve, and what questionable expedients are resorted

to for meeting those expenses! Many of them will not bear the light, unless we can believe that the gospel may be made use of for getting architectural magnificence, or any object of mere worldly ambition. You may not be of this opinion; but can you seriously believe that sermons should be preached, or religious services should be held for any other object, than those contemplated in the New Testament; or that the comical combination of Christian theology with pounds, shillings, and pence, is sanctioned by that holy Book?

But you say, cannot we kill two birds with one stone? No, we cannot. At least we cannot do it with what the scripture calls "a single eye:" and if we attempt it, instead of killing two birds, we shall not kill one, especially if we aim at birds of different natures, and flying in opposite directions. Some one said that he as surely believed that God had given him that monster chapel, as though he had sent an angel to clear the ground for it. If Mr. Müller had said this with regard to his orphan establishment, there would have been some reason in it, and some religion in it; but to say it of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and especially to say it amidst all the laughter and fun exhibited at the opening of it, was something like a burlesque on the character and dispensations of Almighty God.

In the *Primitive Church Magazine*, is the following statement:—

"The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon will preach in the Corn Exchange, Preston, Feb. 19, 1861, *Admission by ticket only*. PRICES OF TICKETS FOR ONE SERVICE:—Reserved seats, front gallery, 5s.; platform 5s.; reserved seats, gallery 2s. 6d.; upper gallery windows, 1s. 6d.; elevated sides (area), 1s. 6d.; area, 1s., under gallery (standing), 6d."

The following postscript was not in the original. "It will be clearly seen from this advertisement, that

the performance at the Corn Exchange is not intended to get religion into the people, but to get money out of them. It is therefore particularly requested that rich perishing sinners, and all those in gay clothing, will take the five shilling tickets, and that none but poor perishing sinners, and those in vile raiment, will take the sixpenny ones. An early application is recommended; as the principal performer has already met with unbounded applause in the metropolis, the tickets no doubt will soon be at a premium. Those who have no shillings or sixpences to spare, will please to keep outside the building; for, according to the new order of things, the gospel is no longer without money or without price. It will be useless to make a rush at the doors without tickets, for the police will be stationed there to prevent all unqualified sinners from entering in!"

At the close of last year £6,000 were still wanted to defray the expenses of the Tabernacle. To raise this sum, many meetings were held. At Islington the minister observed, that it was only a matter that occurred once in his life, and he therefore felt like the man who was doomed to be hanged:—"Its only once," said he, "and I would like it done thoroughly well." Can you point out to me any gravity, piety, or humanity, in that remark? But if you will read my letters to Mr. Hyper, you will see that joking about death, about the sufferings of humanity, and about eternal things, is quite common to the Ultra school of divines.

I will now give you a very brief account of one of those meetings. It was held in a Chapel at Walworth, on the evening of the 7.12.'60. The minister of the Tabernacle presided. But the meeting was conducted in a very objectionable manner. By some facetious remarks the chairman

struck the key-note of the evening's diversion. With one exception, all the speakers appeared like a set of merry-andrews; they joked about the thriftiness of Scotchmen, about the water of baptism, about the modes of preaching, about the wiles of the devil, about "going the whole hog," and about all sorts of things, to such a degree, that for more than two hours there was nearly one continued roar of laughter throughout the congregation. In fact, the place of public worship was converted into a place of public amusement; and the amusement was all the worse for being mixed up with singing and prayer. I am aware that without all this nonsense the people would not have been so well pleased, and the money would not have been so plentifully supplied. Mr. Rowe made the best speech of the evening, but it was the only one that was not greeted with applause, because there was no levity in it, no fun in it, and nothing in it to satisfy the morbid appetite for amusement. I saw a very respectable black man at the meeting. He must have thought that we had a very funny God, or a very funny way of showing our respect to him, and of promoting his cause.

2. Such a building will always prove a kind of vortex into which will be drawn persons of other churches, as well as persons of no church at all. This result would not only be pleasing to party spirit, but would be hailed as a mark of God's approbation of the building, or of the minister officiating in it. Prompted by that spirit, some would dance and sing, would blow the trumpet in Zion, and make all the newspapers and religious magazines to resound with acclamations of the preacher's talents, and of the onward march of divine truth. But all

this might only be appearance and not reality. Get the excitement of novelty; mingle some laughter with singing and prayer, and you may always collect a crowd, and command applause. I do not say that all that takes place in a monster chapel, or in a Catholic chapel, must necessarily be nothing but outside show. Oh no! but I wish to remind you that a regiment which is made strong by making other regiments weak, may be called a crack regiment; but that it is nothing to boast of, is nothing conducive to the strength of the army, or to the safety or glory of the kingdom it is called to defend.

3. A monster chapel is more likely to be the scene of a panic, with all its fearful consequences, than one of smaller dimensions: it may be said that this liability to panic tells as much against immense gatherings of every kind. Perhaps it does; but then "certain lewd fellows, of the baser sort," are never so ready to raise false alarms among the sinners as among the saints. I will say but little about that panic in the Music Hall, which resulted in the groans of the living, and in the horrors of the dead. That fearful event can never be forgotten; and one would think that none but those who had hearts of stone would ever have put themselves in the way which might, by possibility, induce the recurrence of a catastrophe so much to be deplored.

4. But the most cogent reason against a monster congregation is the injury it must necessarily inflict on the minister who constantly preaches to it. Mr. Jay said that the practice of preaching three times on the Lord's day was the devil's invention for killing ministers. But what is that compared with the labour of preaching several times a week to an overwhelming multitude? No man can afford to do

this, and God never qualified a man to do this; and no principle of religion, and no necessities of the Church, require him to do this. Happy the shepherd who, going to heaven himself, has a thousand sheep to follow where he leads the way. Constituted as humanity is, and constituted as society is, a congregation of a thousand persons is a very good stint for the strongest man in the world. Vanity, or a mistaken zeal, may build metropolitan tabernacles, and get thousands upon thousands to fill them, but this may be to worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is "God over all blessed for ever."

When the hive gets over-crowded the bees swarm; and guided by a queen, seek accommodation elsewhere: but in that case we never think of providing a hive large enough to contain a dozen smaller ones. A monster hive would indeed be a curiosity, and like all curiosities would create a stir, and for a time would put the weak-minded into an ecstacy of joy; but it would be no real advantage to anyone: the honey would be no sweeter, and the quantity of it would be no greater, than if we had never departed from the old fashioned mode of obtaining it.

The minister who preaches from week to week, and almost from day to day, to a monster congregation, is upon the high road to ruin; I mean to the ruin of his mortal frame. Albert Smith's exertions in this line were almost unexampled, but his public speaking required no mental effort, and involved no mental anxiety, compared with the public speaking of a minister of the gospel. Yet nature inflicted on him a dreadful blow for tampering with her laws, and despising her commands. He was suddenly struck down; he rose again, but not with vivacity undiminished, or with natural force unabated. Too

soon he re-entered upon the same perilous course for which he had been afflicted; he was struck down a second time, and then, he fell to rise no more.

The brain, that delicate, that mysterious organ, must not be trifled with; and must not be taxed beyond its powers of endurance; give it too much to do, and you will produce a mental intoxication, or a morbid action, not only fatal to its well being, but even to its very existence. All seems to go on gloriously or swimmingly for a time, but it is only for a time, and very often only for a short time too. The undue cerebral excitement is certainly, though silently, undermining the man's strength, and making him only the wreck of what he once was. I could cite many examples of it, but I forbear; I will only add, that Luke, "the beloved physician," knows this well; and that, knowing it, he ought to take the young man aside, and tell him most faithfully, what are, and necessarily what must be, the fearful, and even fatal consequences of an over-worked brain.

Committees and congregations are no proper judges in this matter. Here is a young man nearly overpowered with exertions in preaching to immense multitudes; it is determined that he shall make a continental tour to recruit his exhausted strength; but it is also determined to get up a monster meeting to greet him on his return* that is, it is determined to lose no time in bringing him again into contact with that very thing which caused the prostration of his powers. This is just as reasonable as it would be to give a bowl of brandy and water to a convalescent, who had previously injured his health by drinking of that deleterious compound. People have no mercy on a very popular preacher; they cheer him on, and almost goad him on, to the very verge

* Freeman, 6.6.'60.

of destruction; just like the mob, who will throw up their caps, and shout, and sing, and dance, while Green is ascending in a balloon, or Blondin is walking over a fearful chasm upon a tight rope, not reflecting and not caring to reflect, that in a moment the man may be dashed to pieces!

The consideration of supernatural aid is here out of the question; for God will not spare his own elect from the sorrow, and the sickness, and the death consequent upon an infraction of nature's laws. These laws are rigidly uniform in their operation, and without variableness or the shadow of turning. Besides, it is much more clear that God has called the preacher to act conformably with his physical constitution, than that he ever called him to preach to a monster congregation, or to any congregation at all. Be as holy as an angel, yet to save you from tribulation, God will never interpose in any marvellous or miraculous manner, while the operation of what is already established is sufficient for the purpose. "Be sure your sin will find you out;" the day of retribution will come; nature is preparing to strike the blow; no tears, no entreaties, will ward it off: she will inflict the punishment, and inexorably inflict the punishment due to a violation of her wise and well-known laws. And what is that punishment? Here it is:—

"On 12.12.'59, the Rev. J. Blackburn, aged 39, committed suicide. He was largely engaged in literary pursuits, in addition to his clerical duties, and it is evident that he had overdone his brain by too hard work!"

LETTER IX.

THE SINGING GALLERY.

To Mr. Deacon, Octagon Chapel, near the Royal Crescent, Brighthelmstone.

THE late John Angell James, of Birmingham, speaks of a minister who said that the devil had a freehold in every singing-gallery in the kingdom. This may not be absolutely correct; but that he has one in yours will not admit of a doubt, since in the following conversation with Peter, you not only acknowledged the fact, but you also acknowledged that you had been a party to the conveyance of a property consecrated to the service of God :—

Peter. How is your freeholder getting on in the singing gallery?

Deacon. Worse and worse. Singing never so good; conduct never so bad.

P. But why did you convey the freehold to him?

D. It was, I sssure you, for a valuable consideration.

P. What! did he give you a sum of money for it?

D Oh, no! he only gave a promissory note, which to us appeared more valuable than any pecuniary consideration. In that note he promised to draw sinners of both sexes, and of all classes, into our chapel, and with the aid of a powerful organ

and the sweetest voices, to do all in his power to revive our drooping cause.

P. How did he fulfil these promises?

D. He never fulfilled them at all. It is true that he brought a great number of singers into the gallery, and a great number of sinners into the congregation, but that was to aid his own cause, not ours; for the congregation was not only excluded from the gallery, but from taking part in the singing also.

P. Did they complain of this exclusion?

D. Yes; but it was of no use. The freeholder said that the singing gallery belonged to him; that he would sing when he liked and sing what he liked, without consulting any one; and that as he never interfered with the parson in the choice of his text, so he hoped no one would ever interfere with him in the choice of his tune.

P. But why, in the first instance, did you trust him? Had you no suspicion that you were negociating with the father of lies?

D. Ah! there we were deceived; we did not know his real character or even his real name; he was so plausible, and said so many fine things about the necessity of an improved psalmody in the house of God.

P. Well, I can easily imagine that you were deceived: for, as Paul says that Satan is transformed into an angel of light, it is no wonder that he should be transformed into a sweet singer of Israel; but what name did he assume when you negociated with him?

D. He called himself Apollo.

P. What did the church say to that statement?

D. The most part said they had never heard of such a person, while one aged disciple said that

he thought that the gentleman must mean that his name was Apollyon.

P. How did you receive that suggestion?

D. Receive it! I would not receive it at all. I cried out "Order, order," and many joined in with me as in the chorus of a song. Indeed, that one uncharitable remark made me decided, and I said, "Mr. Apollo, the singing gallery is yours."

P. But, after you found out that you really had got Apollyon instead of Apollo, did you not try to get rid of him?

D. We did; but we found to our cost that it is much easier to get the devil into our house than it is to get him out of it.

P. But, did not your minister say, that "there is no concord between Christ and Belial?"

D. He did say so; but he said it so feebly, or rather so flippantly, that we thought there was not much in it, or at any rate that it was not a rule without exception. Indeed, if he says any thing to make the people serious, he soon says something to make them laugh!

P. Then, with "Punch in the pulpit," and with the devil in the singing gallery, you must have a fine time of it!

D. Fine, indeed! What with our serio-comic preaching and our musical performances, great havoc is made of the church. The singing is loud; the preaching is admired; the congregation is good; but altogether the Octagon is anything but "the house of God and the gate of heaven."

Now, Mr Deacon, have the kindness to look upon this dialogue as an exordium to a lecture with which you are to be favoured on the subject of the singing gallery. If you should feel it to be rather severe, don't be alarmed, for in the end it will do you good—

it will make you a better man and a better steward of the mysteries of God. Some may think that the improprieties of the singing-gallery are here exaggerated. I assure you that they are not; and that if I were to say all that might be said, godly ministers and deacons would rise up as one man to pronounce a sentence of condemnation against them. But let me be more explicit on this important subject.

1. The evil I complain of is this:—A number of persons are marked off from the rest of the congregation to sing or to chant the praises of God: to act, indeed, as proxies for all those who cannot, who will not, or who must not join in this holy exercise. To make matters worse, you have lately introduced chanting; but how can Polly Hopkins join in it? It is too quick for her; it is too scientific for her; indeed, for the congregation generally. It is said that chanting is a sort of steeple-chase, in which the only object of the individual singer is to be "in at the death."

If the persons thus marked off were of unexceptionable character, the proceeding would evidently be a wrong one, because it would give a monopoly to a few, of what should be the privilege of all: it would strengthen an opinion already too prevalent, that we go to chapel to hear the singing, instead of going there to sing ourselves. This practice likewise makes the singing gallery too much like the orchestra of a place of amusement; for, disguise it as you may, or deny it if you can, the singing of a chapel choir always glides into a mere display of musical talent, which all are at liberty to admire, but in which none but a favoured few are permitted to take any prominent part, But worse than this: you know, Mr. Deacon, that our choirs are promiscuous

assemblages of good, bad, and indifferent—mere singing men and singing women appointed, and not unfrequently hired to offer up the sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise. Really, if this is right, it would be hard to say what is wrong, or in what case religion is absolutely necessary for the service of God.*

2. And what is your motive for making this arrangement? To please God? *You* will hardly say this; for you often sing, "God abhors the sacrifice where not the heart is found." You know that Miss Crescendo is not admired for her religion, nor even for her modesty, but only for her fine figure and beautiful voice, and yet you place her in the most conspicuous part of the gallery. Why did you hire Miss Treble, of the concert room: Mr. Tenor, of the Red Lion; and Miss Semitone, of the Catholic Chapel? Was it that you might better glorify God? or that you might better realise those spiritual blessings for which singing was instituted, and for which Christians assemble together in the name of the Lord? No! you will say, nothing of the kind. Why, then, do you resort to such characters for the service of the Lord's house? I believe you would reply, "I do so to attract a multitude to hear the gospel; and I am not without a hope that some of this multitude, who at present are only lovers of the music, or lovers of the musicians, may, in process of time, become the true lovers of God."

I hear that Miss Alto is engaged at the opening of your church to sing select pieces of music during the service. I disapprove of it. The church is not the place to which crowds of persons ought to be attracted by professional singing. It is a profanation to convert the house of God into a place for a musical performance. To swell a congregation by an advertisement of professional singing is a course unworthy the minister of Christ and ill adapted to promote the glory of God.—*Bishop of Ripon.* 8.'60.

3. But is not this purchasing the multitude at too dear a rate? Is not this doing evil that good may come? And is not evil always done when you call in any thing like sham to support the cause of God? What is your singing gallery but a sham? Your choir is singing most loudly to the praise and glory of themselves, under the pretext of singing to the praise and glory of God. They are stupidly giving thanks for light they never saw, for a Saviour they never loved, and for joys they never felt; and singing without honesty, they are singing without melody in the heart to the Lord. The whole thing is a vain show, a kind of religious masquerade, in which the agents are like unto a whited sepulchre, which appears, indeed, beautiful outward, but which inwardly is full of rottenness, and of dead men's bones!

4. Take another view of this solemn mockery, or pious fraud. The singing is suspended, and the sermon is begun, for the choir is willing that the parson should have his turn, provided that his turn does not last too long. But while the preaching is going on, there is no inactivity among the singers: there is whispering, there is laughing, there is winking between Miss Treble and Mr. Air; there is the interchange of pencil-written notes between Mr. Major and Miss Sharp; there are the two Miss Minors, one amusing herself with the pitch-pipe, and the other with the tuning-fork; there is turning over the leaves of the music book, and there is going on everything that is disgraceful to themselves, and irreverent towards God. To those so ignobly engaged the sermon is nothing, the prayer is nothing, and the worship is nothing; their great aim is to be well up in their music, and to be well prepared for the next exhibition of it. They came not to adore,

but to perform; not to be edified, but to be admired; not to be piously, but merely to be professionally engaged in the service of God.

5. I know that in the event of getting rid of Mr. Apollo you propose to place the choir under the direction of the pious Dr. Crotchet; but this would be useless, for while you place yourself under the guidance of a wrong principle, what can a crotchet do to relieve you? It was only the other Sunday that some of the choir were concerting measures to hitch off Dr. Crotchet's wig, not because they thought the wig unornamental, or out of place, but simply because they wanted a spree. The doctor was not aware of their wicked design, and he is not aware of one-half the tricks they play off as graceful accompaniments to praising God. Besides, you know that when Mr. Bass was reproved for conduct, which, like his music, is very low, that all the choir took his part, not upon the principle of doing what was right; but upon the principle of doing what was wrong; hence they not only began to sing his praise, but even to threaten a strike in his favor; that is, as workmen leave their employers in the lurch, unless they get more pay; so these sweet singers in Israel would leave Mr. Deacon in the lurch, and would leave the congregation in the lurch, and would even leave heaven itself in the lurch, unless they got a ready compliance with their wishes about Mr. Bass! This choir was not a Roman Catholic choir, yet it must have belonged to the same order of worthies as that pope, who being much annoyed at the frequent pauses in a religious procession, of which he formed a part, sent word to the directors of it that if they did not move on more quickly, he would renounce Christianity!

6. Here is the error of the present day: we are trying to mingle amusement with religion, as though the latter were such a bitter draught that it required something to sweeten it; but the compound is neither one thing nor the other. In tasting it, Mr. Saint says, that the amusement has spoilt the religion; and Mr. Sinner says, that the religion has spoilt the amusement. So true it is that there can be no concord between Christ and Belial, and no fellowship between light and darkness. I know that music is very attractive to men of all religions, and to men of no religion at all. Get up a good chapel concert, and you will be sure to have a good attendance; but then it must be remembered that music, and especially what is called sacred music, is very deceptive. How often do young people mistake the pleasurable feelings derived from it, for those more spiritual and more exalted sentiments which are acceptable and well pleasing to God. And though it may not be absolutely true, yet generally speaking, where a choir is, there discord is, there confusion is, and every evil work!

It is true that you cannot be answerable for the piety of all who sing; but you are answerable for the piety of all whom you appoint to sing, or to take any leading part in the service of the Lord. Don't think, Mr. Deacon, that I am an advocate for bad music! No! there is nothing spiritual in musical ignorance, and nothing pleasurable in the utterance of discordant sounds. Let all the church learn to make a joyful noise. Let your musical friends not cluster together, but let them disperse themselves all over the congregation, that they may help those who cannot sing so well as themselves. This would not render them so prominent, or so much the objects of admiration, as

though they were congregated in a particular spot; but it would render them more effective in improving the psalmody of the church, and in serving the cause of God. Whether, Mr. Deacon, you adopt this suggestion or not, I exhort you, as you value that peace which passeth all understanding, and for which the sweetest or sublimest music would be but a sorry exchange; as you value true prosperity, and the glory of God, avoid these choirs, or mere companies of singing men, and singing women. In all churches and chapels where music is in the ascendant, religion must go down; preaching or praying, or any devout exercise, must be pushed to the wall, or be trodden under foot, that Apollo may be glorified, and that the way may be cleared for the passage of his popular and triumphal car!

Once more. You told me that in Surrey Chapel the organ plays a very conspicuous part in the worship of God, even to the extent of sounding out Amen to the prayer of the people. But you are mistaken; for no fiddle, no kettle-drum, and no box of whistles, can take any part in Christian worship. And you must be aware that they are always introduced into a chapel or a church for the amusement of the people, and not for the glory of God. You have heard of the *praying* machines so common among the Calmuc Tartars. These machines consist of small wooden windmills attached to the outside of their huts, on which the priests inscribe certain prayers, that they may be *turned about* to save the persons living in these huts the trouble of repeating them, just as your organs play tunes to save the people the trouble of singing them. I know that you have not yet gone far enough into the regions of absurdity to wish for praying machines; but you have

gone quite far enough in that direction to adopt *praising* machines; for what is the organ but a mechanical contrivance for amusing the people, or for relieving the people in the worship of God?

1. You say that it is not expected that the organ shall offer praise, but that it shall assist the congregation in doing so. This reason is more specious than solid, for there is much music played upon the organ in which the people are not expected to take a part. Of this character is the voluntary: there is also the parting salute, a kind of musical and valedictory address, called "playing the people out of Church." All this proves that the organ is not intended, at least, that it is not exclusively intended to assist the people in singing the praises of God.

2. But what saith the New Testament? It says, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." But if you say, I will sing with the organ also, you say what you ought not to say, for the fact is, that in all the Bible there is neither precept nor example for the use of instrumental music in the worship of the Christian Church.

3. And what says the Church of England? In the Book of Homilies, sanctioned by the 35th Article, it says thus:—"Rejoice and give thanks to God that our Church is delivered from the piping and playing upon organs, which was in use before the reformation, which displeased God so sore, and which so filthily defileth the holy house and place of prayer!"

4. Besides all this, what an amount of secular labour does organ-playing involve on the Sabbath day. Not only are the head, the hands, and the feet of the organists severely taxed, but there are

thousands of bellows-blowers employed in raising the wind for the service of God. You need nothing to convince you of the absurdity of *praying* machines, and I trust that you will need nothing to convince you of the absurdity of *praising* machines, or of any manual labour, or mechanical contrivance, for assisting you in singing the praises of God.

LETTER X.

ANTINOMIANISM.

To Timothy Titus, of the School of Jesus Christ.

You say that you have often admired the teaching of our Lord, as exhibited in what is usually called the Sermon on the Mount. Good. But let the preaching of a minister be in strict accordance with that sermon, and Mr. Highflyer would say that it was nothing better than Arminian rubbish! So different is the Antinomian school from that school to which you belong. You have not so learned Christ, and perhaps you now know, for the first time, that anyone should ever have learnt him after this sort. As you are only in the morning of life, you are not yet well acquainted with what is called the religious world, and I can assure you that you may be in Christ and go to heaven without being acquainted with it at all. Still, considering the position that you are likely to occupy, it is necessary that you should know something about it, not that you may love it altogether, or hate it altogether, but that you may try the things that differ, and be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

In that world Antinomianism holds a prominent place. It is true that some are Antinomian in tehory and not in practice, while others are Antinomian in practice and not in theory; these are the inconsistent members of every denomination,

who know what is right, but do what is wrong. But whether in theory or in practice, you cannot be too much on your guard against a heresy which doth eat as a canker into the very vitals of personal piety, causing men to be lifted up with pride, and then to fall into the snare of the devil.

Now Antinomianism is not a mere chimæra,—is not an ecclesiastical bugbear which priestcraft has set up to frighten the people, as we set up a scarecrow to frighten away the birds. No! it is a real and not an imaginary evil, which has a mighty power to please the world and to deceive the very elect. But still you ask, what Antinomianism is, because it is confessedly of a chameleon character, exhibiting different colors, and assuming a variety of names. It is a good thing to come to terms, and to know really what it is we are talking about, and especially what it is we are frightened about. Literal definitions will not always aid our inquiries in this matter, because words very often outlive the propriety of their original meaning. It is true that *anti*-nomos signifies literally against law, but that will no more give you an idea of what Antinomianism is, than the word *electron*, or amber, will give you a correct notion of what electricity is. Leaving then the etymon of the word, let us come to the thing which it is intended to signify.

You have heard of that holy man of God, John Flavel. Your friend, Mr. Highflyer, calls him a freewiller, a duty-faith man, &c. But don't think the worse of him on that account; for I can assure you, dear Timothy Titus, that hard words and nicknames can prove nothing excepting the want of brotherly kindness and charity in those who make use of them. Well, how does John Flavel say that you may detect the thief called Antinomianism?

He says, that bad character is known by the following signs:—

1. He uses slighting and vilifying expressions of the holy law of God.
2. He holds opinions and principles inclining to a careless disregard and neglect of the duties of obedience, under the pretext of free grace and liberty by Christ.
3. He holds opinions neglecting or slighting sanctification as the evidence of justification; and counting it as useless or sinful to try the state of our souls by the graces of the Holy Spirit wrought in us, &c.

4. There is yet a fourth sign which, though not mentioned by Flavel, may yet be considered as one of the outward and visible signs of the Antinomianism that reigns within. It is this. I never knew an Antinomian minister that was not impudent, and very much addicted to scurrilous jesting in the pulpit. From one example learn a thousand more of a similar kind. It is not long since a minister was publicly recognized as the pastor of a Baptist church at Deptford. On that occasion, the Rev. Mr. Antinomian addressed the church thus: "If you meet with any of those wishy-washy men called moderate Calvinists, have nothing to do with them; send them away, yea send them to the devil, and without letting them have a return-ticket." This may be considered, if not a very beautiful, yet a very striking illustration of the impudent and scurrilous jocularity almost inseparable from hyper-calvinistic or Antinomian preaching.

In Aldersgate Street, in the city, is an old dissenting meeting-house, where Timothy Priestly, brother of the great Dr. Priestly, was accustomed to preach. Before him the pulpit was occupied by Mr. Hart; and who has not heard of this good minister of Jesus Christ; and who has not been edified by the hymns which bear his name? For reasons stated in my

letter to Mr. David, many of these hymns are but ill-adapted for singing the praises of God. This, however, is only stated as a matter of opinion; but it is not a matter of opinion, but a matter of fact, that Mr. Hart once fell into the error of Antinomianism; and his own account of his Antinomian experience will give you a better idea of what that heresy really is, than would be given you by any lengthened or laboured disquisition on the subject. He says:—

"I really thought I had obtained by Christ a liberty of sinning, and I was resolved to make use of it; and thought the more I could sin without remorse, the greater hero I was in faith. A tender conscience I deemed weakness; prayer I left for novices and bigots; and a broken and a contrite heart was a thing too low and legal for me to approve, much more to desire."

Than the late Rev. Harrington Evans no man was more attached to the doctrines of free grace; no man would more completely strip the sinner of all his fancied excellencies and moral attainments; and no man could preach more boldly, or sing more sweetly, "Worthy is the Lamb to receive blessing, and glory, and honour, for ever." And yet no man was further removed from that fatal error of which I am writing. "Beware of Antinomianism," said he, most emphatically, on his death-bed, to one who was inquiring if he had any particular direction for her. "Do you mean by that," said the inquirer, "a resting in the doctrines of grace, without watchfulness of the walk before God?" "I do:" was his reply, "all that religion is a fallacy!"

I once knew a jocular preacher of the Hyper school, who was remarkable for a very red nose. About the cause of that redness I say nothing; but I do say that where Antinomianism is, intemperance is, and licentiousness is, and everything is which is contrary

to morality and to the fear of the Lord. Why, it is well known that Dr. Strongman, of Camberwell, (for so is his name by interpretation) was a tippler, and that he was so whilst lashing all the opponents of the free grace of God. Your friend, Thomas Smith, saw a man in the public market-place, who, while in a state of intoxication, was advocating the doctrines of grace, proclaiming aloud that the dear people of God never can backslide, and that sin can do the believer no harm.*

It is, however, only fair to admit that cases of inconsistency and of religious declension are not confined to the Hyper school; but the practice of palliating crime, and of making the commission of it to consist with a gracious state and with final safety, *is* confined to that school. A man who had made great proficiency in it was guilty of adultery; the most disastrous consequences ensued; even death itself was the fruit of his transgression. But, in a certain sense, this act of immorality was the very making of him. He, who before, was an obscure individual, suddenly rose into notoriety as a man of deep experience and as eminently qualified to build up the church of God!

You will say that this is an extreme case. Well, so it is; but I can assure you that Antinomian Christianity prevails to a very alarming extent. The *facts* of the following dialogue rest upon undeniable authority. The *dramatis personæ* are somewhat disguised, in order that they may not be known; for while I wish you to hate Antinomanism, I have no wish that you should hate any of the preachers, or the victims of that awful delusion. Let me now introduce you to Mr. Gunpowder and Miss Twankay,

* "Earthen Vessel," 1860, p. 310.

who figure in what follows. They meet together at the tea-table of Bethesda Anniversary. Mr. Gunpowder is one of the most popular preachers of the day, and Miss Twankay, though partial to something spicy from the pulpit, is yet of opinion that Antinomian preachers may go too far—too far for the interests of morality and of religion, and too far for the unperplexed statements of the word of God.

Miss Twankay. I am sorry to hear of the illness of your daughter.

Mr. Gunpowder. Ah, well, it is rather trying to flesh and blood; but the will of the Lord be done.

T. Do you think she has spiritual life?

G. I really don't know.

T. But don't you speak to her upon the subject of her spiritual interests?

G. Not I, indeed; I should be afraid of interfering with the work of the Spirit. Let God begin, and then I will begin, but not before.

T. Your son must feel this affliction.

G. Why, yes! I suppose he does; that is only natural.

T. Pray how is he affected with regard to religion?

G. Really, Miss Twankay, you know as much about it as I do, *for I never spoke to him upon the subject in my life.*

T. I put the question because I have heard that he goes out of town to seek pleasure on the Lord's day.

G. Ah, we are not so straight-laced as some other people on the subject of Sabbath-keeping.

T. In Paris, I understand, that they are not straight-laced on this subject at all; for there they have cards, and music, and theatrical amusements, on the Lord's day.

G. Ah! I should like my son to enjoy all these things if he went there!

T. What! Mr. Gunpowder, you a minister, and wish your son to mingle with the licentious and profane, and to enter into all their lying vanities!

G. Why, you know that he is still in the flesh, and that therefore these things can do him no harm!

T. Well, I bless God that I had parents who taught me far otherwise, and made me feel the sinfulness of these things!

G. Ah! Miss Twankay, I fear by that remark that you are still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity; or that you are not completely translated out of Arminian darkness into the marvellous light and glorious liberty of the Calvinistic creed.

T. What you have said has spoilt my enjoyment of this tea-meeting, and of the anniversary services altogether. But I wonder that neither Mr. High-flyer, nor Mr. Savory, nor Mr. Satellite, the ministers by whom I am surrounded, have not said a word in support of my views.

G. They know better than to do that; I rather suspect that one or two of them would like to do so, but they know that I am the champion of high doctrine, and that my right there is none to dispute. Indeed, there is only one minister in London with whom I would condescend to enter into controversy, but he is too wise to measure swords with me!

T. Well then, it is hopeless for me to dispute with you; and instead of hearing you preach this evening, I shall go home and pray that you may have more humility, and more consistency, and that the Lord may give you understanding in all things.

I trust you now understand what Antinomianism is. It turns the grace of God into lasciviousness;

and even urges the divine decrees in palliation of human guilt. It makes Christ the minister of sin, and proclaims aloud that immorality or crime can do the believer no harm. In my reply to your question, What is Antinomianism? I have not avoided all reference to the Bible, but I have avoided all reference to any abstruse reasoning on the subject; instead of doing so, I have shown you how it is exhibited in the life and conversation. Many years ago, the Rev. John Berridge drew a picture of an Antinomian, and here it is:—

"Last Midsummer, I went to Gamble fair, and when the market was well over, a knot of graziers, old acquaintance, dined with me in a public house. Being seated round the table, a pert young fellow stepped into the room, who flung his hat into the window, and thrust a chair among us to partake of the ordinary. His name we learnt afterwards was, *Mr. Fulsome*, and that his mother's maiden name was *Miss Wanton*. Mr. Fulsome was mighty still at dinner, and played his knife and fork exceedingly well—no man better; but when the cloth was removed, and some few tankards had gone round, Mr. Fulsome's face looked like the "Red Lion," painted on my landlord's sign, and his mouth began to open. He talked swimmingly about religion, and vapoured much in praise of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Each fresh tankard threw a fresh light on this subject, and drew out a fresh head of discourse. "No sin," said he, "can hurt me; I have had a call, and my election is safe. Satan may *pound* me, but Jesus must *replevy* me. What care I for drunkenness, for whoredom, for cheating, and a little lying? These sins may hurt another, but they cannot hurt me; let me wander where I will from God, Jesus Christ must fetch me back again. I may fall a thousand times, but I shall *rise* again; yes, I may fall exceeding foully." And so he did, for instantly he pitched with his head upon the floor, and tankard in his hand. The tankard was recovered, but no one thought it worth while to lift up Mr. Fulsome, nor did he rise from his foul fall according to his prophecy. We left him silent on the floor when the shot was paid."

Now mind, I do not say that all your Hyper friends would approve of Mr. Fulsome's conduct, Some indeed might even be alarmed, if they thought that

his conduct was the legitimate consequence of their Antinomian creed. All I contend for is, that they have a fulsome or unholy tendency. Be then on your guard against them; "for the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Let the sensualist, and the worldling, and the equally guilty Antinomian, say what they will, and do what they please; but I charge thee, O Timothy Titus, to remember that there can be no living to the Lord, no living peaceably with all men, no living by faith on the Son of God, and no eating of the bread of life that thou mayest live for ever, without living "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

Once more, beware of those who say, It is true that Antinomianism is bad enough, but our dear minister does not preach it. But he does preach it. What proof can you have more conclusive than in the following words, not only preached by him, but published under his own direction:—

"Can you say that you love God's truth? If so, that settles the matter. 'Oh, but *I have done* so and so, and so and so.' Nothing to do with that. 'O but,' say you, 'this is presumption.' Is it? Do you know how the 13th of John ends? 'No, I have forgotten.' Well, then, I will tell you, 'Verily, verily I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice.' That is how that chapter ends. Now, do you know how the 14th begins? I will tell you, 'Let not your heart be troubled.'"—S. T. P. 7.3.'59.

That is, if you are guilty of Peter's sin, or of any other sin, don't be troubled about it!

This is in print; but for the following *morçeau*, I am indebted to a friend who really heard it delivered from the pulpit:—

If you get drunk on Saturday night, that should not hinder you from coming to the Lord's table, on a Sunday morning. I have no notion of fine ladies in a drawing room, like so many fat cats, sitting in judgment on the dear people of God.

Thus, as Dr. Waterland says, "It is the purity of the gospel which is so hard of digestion, and one moral commandment is a greater stumbling block than many creeds."

LETTER XI.

JOCULAR PREACHING—ACCOMPANIMENTS OF IT.

To Mr. Hyper, of the "Cave of Adullam."

In your school there is a vocabulary of hard words, and of nicknames, resembling a heap of stones, kept ready for chastising any unfortunate brother, whom the interests of Zion require to be pelted or to be knocked down. Only let a minister preach fairly and legitimately from such a text as this, "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," and instantly from the pews above and from the pews below, a shower of stones would be pelted at him; that is, there would come forth loud murmurs of condemnation or discontent: young men and maidens, old men and children would cry out, "free-willer!" "duty-faith man!" "yea, and nay, minister!" More frightened would they be than if the house were on fire, or than if they had found out a drunkard or a thief! And even if, upon the whole, they considered him a sound divine, yet if he uttered anything that was unstamped or unlicensed by the great masters, the hubbub about him would be nearly as great, and nearly as destructive to his reputation, as though he had been convicted of heterodoxy, or even of immorality and crime.

In order to illustrate my meaning, I will relate a

little incident which not long ago occurred in the history of your Church. In the neighbourhood of London is a certain locality highly prized by your friends on account of its sacred grove. Thither for many years the faithful were accustomed to resort, that they might feed on the rich pastures of Hyper-Calvinism. On the removal of the pastor, the effects of this high feeding became painfully apparent. Another pastor is called in, who in all essential points resembles his predecessor, but in feeding the sheep he throws down something which they take up, but which they cannot swallow; they make wry faces, and utter strange noises, on account of it. Some indeed run wild and break loose from the fold; but others, who remain, say that what they had taken was poison, and will have no more of it. The pastor offers to explain, and to prove that what they complain of is nothing but good and wholesome food, and that the reason of its disagreeing with them was their morbid appetite and bad state of health. But instead of listening to his explanation, they make him an offender for a word; they call him hard names, drive him from the fold, and even threaten him with the police, and with personal violence, should he ever again exercise pastoral care, or Christian kindness, within the precincts of their sacred grove.

Now, in raising such a hue and cry about nothing at all, these worthies seem to resemble those mischievous boys, who, liking the exercise of power, tie a tin kettle to a dog's tail for wanton sport, or to raise a false alarm. They may drive the dog mad; but what care they? They designed to show their power for mischief, and their design is accomplished. And those who call ministers by nicknames, and try to destroy their reputation, are little aware what dis-

astrous consequences may result from this exercise of wanton and irresponsible power. I make this remark, lest in calling you Mr. *Hyper*, I should be chargeable with following the example of those worthies who themselves follow the example of the boys with the dog and the tin kettle. I call you, then, Mr. *Hyper*, not for the sake of giving you a nickname, but for the sake of distinguishing you from other religionists to whom you do not belong. You know that the term is simple enough, meaning nothing more than *beyond*, and that it is the well-known designation of those who go *beyond* Calvin; or, as I have heard you express it, of those who think that this celebrated divine was not sufficiently Calvinistic in his doctrinal views.

But all this is only by the way. Let me now come to the point. I have something very important to urge against your views of the Christian religion. I am about to show that those who entertain those views, and especially those who preach them, invariably manifest a spirit of levity and of irreverence in religious exercises: and that the higher they go, the more flippant and the more flighty they become. I mean to show that this is not an accidental circumstance, depending on individual idiosyncracy, but that it is something inherent in a system, and inseparably connected with it. Thus the Rev. Mr. Antinomian keeps the congregation in a constant titter, while discoursing on the fact that Sarah laughed on hearing that *she* was to have a son. He says, "Didn't she laugh? I think she did, and pretty loudly too: and wouldn't some of you old ladies in the gallery laugh, too, if it were told you that you were to have a child!" (loud laughter.) But I will stop: much more was said that will not bear repetition. Now, is it not high time for you to pause,

and seriously to reflect, whether a system that is productive of so much levity and of so much irreverence can really be a God-honouring, or a soul-edifying system; or whether, instead of coming from heaven, it does not come from a vain and unsanctified heart?

No sooner did the *Baptist Magazine* fall into the hands of the Ultra party, than it began to exhibit signs of levity, and even of gross jocularity in relation to the things of God. Here is a specimen: Baldwin Brown, in his "Divine Life in Man," had written, that

"Gymnastics, music, fencing, rhetoric, logic, mathematics, were studied and sedulously practised by such young men as hoped to succeed in life. Paul does not undervalue any of these. If I understand his doctrine, godliness ought to include them all."

Now, we must admit that a man may be very godly without being very expert in gymnastics, &c.; yet we must remember that godliness is a comprehensive term which necessarily embraces all the duties of your present state. But now read what the *Baptist Magazine* says on this passage:—

"Standing on tiptoe to catch a look at this very muscular 'godliness,' we wondered how we could so have misread our Bibles. At the next church meeting, in order that we may 'exercise ourselves unto godliness,' we must provide a set of gymnastic poles for our deacons: the young sisters must amuse us with music; while the minister fences with the superintendent of the Sunday school; new church-officers must be elected; professors of rhetoric and of the pugilistic art must turn the vestries into training-schools; and when the debating-clubs and the play-grounds are in full operation, we shall be upon the high road to this new 'mystery of godliness.'"

There is fun for you; there is fair play and faithful representation for you. And where does all this occur? Next to the garden of Gethsemene;

that is, it is found next to a description of the sufferings of Christ! I will not ask whether this fun is "the glory that should follow;" but I will ask whether it is not a striking illustration of the fact that high doctrine and coarse jocularity generally go together.

It would, however, be going too far, to say that jocular preaching is never witnessed but in the Hyper-Calvinistic pulpit. In every denomination there will occasionally spring up a "Tom Bradbury"* preaching with eccentricity enough, and with drollery enough, to afflict the church, and to amuse the world. Billy Dawson was one of this stamp. Very often he was grave, making use of sound speech, which cannot be condemned, but occasionally he could be very facetious, and, consequently, very irreverent in the house of God. He could make game of his Calvinistic brethren, and so distort their views, and expose them to so much ridicule, as to make a chapel more like a place of public amusement than a place of public worship. They who set themselves to run down Calvinism on the one hand, or Arminianism on the other, seldom give fair representations of their opponents' views, and what was at first a contest for the truth, is converted into a trial of strength between the contending parties, in which brotherly kindness or Christian charity is disregarded and trodden under foot. Billy Dawson's parody on one of Newton's hymns was so very droll, that in repeating it, which he did very often, he never failed to carry away the lighter part of his audience from a state of

* A witty divine, who preached in New Court, Carey Street, London. He disputed with Dr. Watts and despised his hymns, but would occasionally make use of them, and then he would say "Let us sing one of Dr. Watts's *whims*."

seriousness, into a state of levity and fun. He would say:

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love *my wife* or no?
Am I *her's* or am I not?

"If I love, why am I thus,
Why this dull and lifeless frame?
Hardly sure can they be worse,
Who have never heard *her* name."

Such treatment of the venerable John Newton's hymns, was more worthy of Punch in the pulpit than of a Methodist in the pulpit. I am of opinion, that these lines of Newton, though fitted for self-examination, are altogether unfitted for public worship. That, however, is not the question; but this is the question: Can a man under the influence of Christian charity, indulge in those commentaries and criticisms, which are obviously fitted to caricature a holy man of God? In John Newton's character there was something so sacred, so judicious, and altogether so excellent, that it is really profane to take any wanton or unwarrantable liberty with it.

This is not the only concession I have to make to your school. I will likewise freely admit that some other ministers have recently been guilty of certain escapades in connecting Christ with "a chip of the old block," with "the great bottle trick,*" &c. But this kind of profane jesting is not inherent in the sentiments of those ministers who for a time made use of it. Besides, it is now dying out, and it is not at all likely that it will revive to any considerable extent. For a time it produced a good deal of merri-

* See letter IV. of this volume.

ment, but it was of short duration, "for as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool."

In other denominations jocular preaching is the exception; in yours it is the rule. You know that the Apostle speaks of "things which accompany salvation." Now I am going to speak of those things which accompany the jocular preaching of salvation, for I have found that when Punch is in the pulpit, he is usually attended with a number of companions who contribute to that hilarity so acceptable to your friends, but so inconsistent with the worship of God. In other words, I have found that where the minister is given to jesting, human learning is despised, spiritualizing is adopted, the devil is familiarly spoken of, puns and parodies, and stupid questions, laconic texts and impromptu sermons are much applauded. Thus, where one error predominates, other errors will cluster round it, and in time become unseparably connected with it. In the following letters, I am going to favour you with some strictures on the things I have just mentioned. To other members of your family I shall enter more particularly into the subject of pulpit jocularity; of the apostles of it, of the modern specimens of it, of the reasons for it, and lastly, of the reasons against it.

LETTER XII.

HUMAN LEARNING—SPIRITUALIZING.

It is no uncommon thing for some of your preachers to pronounce most authoritatively upon some of the most abstruse points of speculative theology. You say that they have so much of the Spirit that they cannot help speaking with authority. Well, I cannot say positively whether they have the Spirit or not; but I can say that some of these very men evince an utter ignorance of the simplest grammatical rules. Now, surely, they who have so much of the Spirit's teaching, ought to know something of that medium through which that teaching is conveyed to the mind of man. You once told me, that it is not the work of the Holy Spirit to teach a man the rules of grammar. True: neither is it the work of the Holy Spirit to teach a man to violate those rules. But you also said, that learning will never take a man to heaven. True again: it will not; neither will ignorance take a man to heaven. It is a mercy to know, that while the former will not qualify for the heavenly state, the latter will not disqualify for it. But many an ignorant man is often more brazen faced than a learned man. This ought not to be, as it involves the absurdity of darkness being preferable to light; or of an ass being preferable to a man. There is one of your most popular preachers who has no more respect for Lindley Murray than he has for John Wesley. There he stands, especially on set occasions, with a brazen front, wielding and flourishing his hyper-calvinistic club,

inflicting deadly blows on all free-willers and duty-faith men, and making them lick the dust. Yea, if on these occasions he were to curse and to swear, though it would not be in keeping with the gospel, it would be in most perfect keeping with the tone and manner of his discourse.

I assure you, Mr. Hyper, that the word learning ought not to alarm the dear people of God; but, on the contrary, it ought to cheer and to comfort their hearts; because it is significant of a process through which we become acquainted with the works of God; works which are not only great, but sought out of all them who have pleasure therein. Whoever, therefore, holds learning in contempt, must hold the knowledge of God's works in contempt, and must resemble more the children of the night than the children of the day. It is true, that learning is often abused and prostituted to purposes for which it was never designed; but this is to say nothing against it; for the same thing may be urged against every blessing with which we are acquainted. It may likewise be safely admitted that learning is not religion; but it is no more to be despised on that account than our daily bread should be despised because it is not "the bread of life which cometh down from heaven, and which giveth life to the world."

SPIRITUALIZING.

THIS is really a barbarous word, and of still more barbarous signification: at least it is so, considering what the Hyper theology makes of it. It is usually one of the accompaniments of jocular preaching, and seems favourable to its development. But Mr. Hyper, I can assure you, that what is usually called spiritualizing the word of God, might, with more pro-

priety, be called scandalizing the word of God. This process may be easily explained. Singular expressions, isolated texts and sentences, especially out of the Old Testament, are made to signify what religion, reason, or common sense, would never say that they could signify. This practice may sometimes show great ingenuity, but it always shows a weak mind and a great want of sobriety on the subject of religion. You call it diving into the deep things of God; but it is really diving into the shallow things of man, and consequently the diver brings up nothing but what is laughable, worthless, or profane.

With what glee did you direct me to a passage in one of the books of Dr. OW., as containing a fine specimen of this spiritualizing process. It is an exposition of this parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Now, the book says that this is the meaning of it:—

"The pearl of great price is the elect; Christ parts with all that he had, even life itself, to complete the purchase; and on the day of his public espousals he will wear the pearl in his crown of rejoicing, and the world in which it was hid will be consumed!"

The folly of such an interpretation must be apparent to every sober-minded man, or rather to every man who is not the slave of the Hyper theology. If this is the meaning of the parable, then the Bible is a collection of puzzles or conumdrums which the preacher is to find out for the use of the faithful. No matter what the parable is, or what the text is, or what the occasion is; it must be twisted or turned about till it shall assume some hyper-calvinistic form, or a strong confirmation of some one of the five

points, or some beautiful phase of the mysteries ef election and of everlasting love.

In your Tabernacle this process is exhibited in the greatest degree of perfection. I was present there, one Sunday morning, while Isaiah xxxviii. 8, was undergoing the spiritualizing process, and here is the result of that process: you know the text is this: "I will bring again the shadow which is gone down on the sun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward." "Now," said the preacher, with an air of triumph, "this is the spiritual meaning of this extraordinary occurrence. The sun-dial is the Sun of Righteousness: the ten degrees are the ten commandments that Christ had remitted the obligation of keeping to his people, had sent them back and reverted to the great law of love." Really, if Dr. OW. is right about the pearl, and Dr. Wells is not wrong about the sun-dial, it would be no difficult thing to get most precious truth out of "Jack the Giant Killer," or out of the "History of Tom Thumb." And if such expositions make men popular, we may conclude with Paley, that a minister's popularity is generally a serious drawback on the excellency of his character.

What I have related about the sun-dial is a fair specimen of the curiosities which are exhibited in the "Surrey Tabernacle." Indeed, it would seem that the preacher regards the Bible as a dish of nuts which he is to crack, and which the people are to eat. I know that you relish those nuts, and that you admire the nut-cracker; but I can assure you that these nuts have nothing in them, nothing that is solid or satisfactory to the renewed mind. Sometimes, indeed, they contain what is worse than nothing, and which if taken into the system, will inevitably induce a state of disease, decay, and death. Yet not more eager is the poor deluded Catholic for the sacred

relics of dead men's bones, than are the believers in the Surrey tabernacle for these curiosities of religion, curiosities which may be designated as the nuts of the hyper-calvinistic theology.

Mathematicians say that the shortest distance between any two points is the straight line; but how many practically deny this; how many are like a man, who, being at the east end of Oxford Street, and wishing to get to the Marble Arch as quick as possible, goes down Bond Street, along Piccadilly and up Park Street, instead of keeping along the high road, for the attainment of his object. Now, this is what your preachers do; they go round Robin Hood's barn; they go to the cave of Adullum; they go down to Gath of the Philistines; they go from Dan even to Beer-sheba, instead of keeping along the high road of the sacred Scriptures. And what is the reason of their doing this? If they were mere worldly men, I should say that it was done for the purpose of amusing the people by popping in and out; by playing at bo-peep; by getting into nooks and corners and obscure places, that they might show their cleverness in getting out of them again into the King's highway, the only way to happiness and to everlasting life.

But you say that *you* have felt your soul refreshed under the sound of this nut-cracking process. Well, this is not improbable; and I am ready to admit that a minister may be truly edifying while talking nonsense. That is, he may be nonsensical with regard to his logic, but edifying with regard to his utterance of gospel truth. Indeed, your hyper-calvinist is like the ancient alchemist, who was always running after the transmutation of the baser metals into gold. This, of course, was only a wild goose chase; but still the chase was not altogether an unprofitable one, for he often captured other game than what he was in

pursuit of. The alchemist contributed in no ordinary degree to advance the cause of science and to extend the knowledge of the world. The question, then, Mr. Hyper, is not whether a spiritualizer may not say some edifying things while he is conducting his process; but this is the question: is it right to put a meaning on texts they were never intended to bear? Is it right to convert every odd expression into gospel, as the alchemist tried to convert every base metal into gold? Is not this dishonouring the Bible by making it say what reason, religion, and common sense declare it never could say.

I have heard of a minister who took for his text those precious words, as you would call them, which are found in Joshua ix. 5, "Old shoes and clouted." Now I can easily conceive that in a discourse to which these words were appended, there might have been the utterance of many good things: yea, it is possible that by such a discourse many might have found their evidences brightened, and their convictions deepened about the doctrine of everlasting love: but why should such a discourse be tacked on to "old shoes and clouted?" Mind, I am not finding fault with this text; I find fault with no text. The sun-dial of Ahaz is good; "Take it by the tail" is good; "Old shoes and clouted" is good; that is, good for the purpose for which they were designed; but not for the purpose of teaching the way of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. You know that Dean Swift wrote a devout meditation on "*a broomstick*," and after describing its origin, its former greenness, and its subsequent dryness, he breaks out into this pious exclamation: "And I said that mortal man was a broomstick!" Tell your friends this, and it may serve to convince them of the folly of trying to get something out of nothing, or of trying to convert

the exercise of preaching into a juggle, and the Bible into a text-book of unseemly jests.

You know that on 14.8.'59, your great favourite preached a funeral sermon for Gog and Magog: it was reckoned one of his noblest efforts, and was received with unbounded applause. It would be useless to write down all the nonsense that was uttered on that occasion; you will find the whole sermon in the Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit. The following is extracted from it:—

"'Lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.' I say it with trembling and grief of heart, lest the righteous put forth the hand of fellowship to duty-faith men, or to the universal exhortation system—that system that would rob the Saviour of his omnipotence.

"'They shall burn the weapons with fire.' 'But,' say the upholders of error, 'we wish to be brethren together;' I shall not mince the matter. To be friendly with you, is to be friendly with the old whore of Babylon.

"I now come to step the third. We are to bury Gog and Magog. Who are to be the buriers? Ministers.

['Who saw him die? I says the fly,
With my little eye, and I saw him die.']*

How long are they to be burying them? Why, seven months· 'Well, what are you going to make out of that?' How long was it from the Passover to the great day of Atonement? 'Why,' say you, 'seven months current.' Very well then, that begins to bury all our sins.

"'But if there shall be a bone left behind, they are to set it up, and set a sign by it; and as the buriers come along they are to bury it.' 'Why you are going to make out that the ministers are the buriers; that they are a sort of undertakers.' So they are. 'What do you mean by a bone?' Why a dead professor. They dress up the old bones now-a-days, and want to persuade you they are new creatures."

After all this, can you deny that Punch has got into the pulpit?

* Not in the original.

LETTER XIII.

THE DEVIL.

I NEVER knew a jocular hyper preacher who did not speak of the great enemy in a most familiar, I might say, in a most disgusting manner. It is true that persons of all denominations now and then allow themselves great latitude in this respect; but I have really heard some of your school speak of the devil as though he were an old acquaintance with whom they had been accustomed to pass an evening, and to smoke a pipe. But is not such levity to be condemned? Is it not trifling with an awfully mysterious subject, and a subject that should never be entertained but with the utmost seriousness of mind? The editor of *The Earthen Vessel*, p. 64, '60, speaks with high glee of a forthcoming publication, to be called, "The Devil among the Parsons;" as though it were to afford a rich treat for the dear children of God. Only think of one of your preachers giving out in the morning that he should preach a funeral sermon for the devil in the evening; or, only think of Huntington calling out from the pulpit of Somerset Street Chapel, Bath, "What the devil are you all coughing about?" And think of Ryland saying to Jay, "If you are in your study after nine o'clock, I wish the devil may appear and drive you to bed."

In my letter on the Metropolitan Tabernacle, I have adverted to the very jocular meeting which was held in a chapel at Walworth, for the purpose of raising money; but it was only to be expected that at such a meeting the devil would be raised likewise. This was done most effectually by brother Atwood, who after having lauded the chairman, and the chairman's Tabernacle, to the skies, warned the meeting against the temptation of Satan upon the subject of giving.

"Good old Mr. Gadsby," said he "at the conclusion of his sermon, took off his neckcloth, tucked up his sleeves, put himself into a boxing attitude, and then said, 'Now for a turn with you, Mr. Devil, about the collection.'"

This anecdote was told in such a comic manner, that it produced the most immoderate laughter I ever heard, demonstrating not that the Spirit of God, but that the spirit of Punch was in that place.

With none of his acquaintance did John Warburton, who was the friend of Gadsby, appear to be on more familiar terms than with the devil. What he did, what he said, or what he suggested, was ever present to John Warburton's mind. In his "going out and in his coming in, in his basket and in his store," in all the circumstances of his public ministry, and in all the scenes of his domestic life, the devil always played a most conspicuous part. John would not only speak of him, but would speak to him, and rate him in the most unmeasured terms. Here is a specimen, *in his own words;*—

"I did dance, and sing, and banter the lying devil, and dared him to come out of his den. I told him that if he did not, he durst not; I called him everything but a gentleman. The devil told me my wife would die, my mouth would be stopped, and that we should come to the workhouse after all. The pigs have got into the garden again; I almost swore at them, and said the devil is in the swine. He vowed vengeance against me if I did not shut my mouth. O, the number of times I have gone to chapel, the devil roaring after me all the way," &c.

Now, I appeal to you whether this kind of twaddle is not common to all your great men, to all your little men, and to all those persons whose Christian experience is supposed to be more than usually deep, and more than usually illustrative of the grace of God. But don't mistake me; I am not ridiculing the doctrine of Satanic influence. Oh no! far from it; I know that "your adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;" but I know that it is not Scriptural, and scarcely even

moral, to appeal to him or to speak of him on every trivial occasion. It is, however, characteristic of your school to do this; and it really shows what a low school it is, and how it is more in accordance with the darkness of the middle ages than with the light of this our gospel day; for whether we read of John Warburton, calling the devil out of his den, and calling him anything but a gentleman, or whether we read of St. Dunstan seizing his nose with a pair of red hot tongs, we read that which is equally fitted to expose the doctrine of Satanic influence to ridicule or contempt.

Many have had a hearty laugh over McGowan's* "Dialogues of Devils"; but really, Mr. Hyper, they refer to a subject which is not to be laughed at, and which we can never treat in a jocular manner, without injury to ourselves, and without condemnation from the word of God. I believe you call Mr. Binney a duty-faith man; and I know that his preaching is neither Hyper nor jocular, yet it would appear that he also can, occasionally, joke about the devil; for on his voyage to Australia, he lectured on "the terms on which the devil does business with mankind." I have no doubt that the sermon was quite in keeping with the text; and in that case, Mr. Binney must have followed in the track of Mc Gowan, of Warburton, and of other droll divines; but that is a dangerous tract, for it leads to the conclusion that the great design of the devil's existence, or of the devil's temptation, was to be a perpetual source of amusement to the dear people of God.

I have known some persons make familiar allusions of this kind, in whom there has been no want of reverence and of the fear of God; and who instead of joking upon this dark subject, never joke upon any subject at all. After a sermon by Dr.

* Formerly a minister at Devonshire Square Meeting House.

Cox, in the Vineyard's Chapel, Bath, the following colloquy took place between brother *Chaffinch* and brother *Brasseur:*—

Chaffinch. Well, we have a tolerable good collection; but I say, Brasseur, what do you imagine the devil thought of the sermon this morning?

Brasseur. I don't know (evidently taken by surprise at the question).

C. I don't think that he liked it, do you know, at the same time peering into Brasseur's face, and maintaining the utmost gravity of manner.

B. Well, perhaps you are right; but I know little or nothing about it.

C. Ah! Dr. Cox is a champion, and the hard hits which he gave the devil this morning did my soul good. He will not recover from them one while, I'll warrant you.

There was something irresistibly comic on this occasion in the manner of Chaffinch; but he intended nothing comic and nothing but what was serious and solemn in the last degree. Had he met with a more congenial spirit, no doubt there would have been a lengthened discussion on the devil's opinion upon the sermon of Dr. Cox. Then there would have been a rich treat for those religionists who think they know a great deal of the state of public opinion in the infernal regions, about the economy of our churches and chapels, and about the merits of our popular divines.

Than brother Chaffinch no man was ever farther removed from all cant, hypocrisy, or of affectation of any kind; but he moved in an eccentric orbit; and all that he said shewed the singularity of his mind. If in public worship he did not sing more sweetly, he certainly sang more loudly than all the rest. Another peculiarity was that he not only sung

aloud, but he also heard aloud, at least he would never let the preacher have all the say to himself; but as the sermon passed along he would throw into it many pious interjections and exhortations, which, in many cases, served to relieve its dulness, and to render it more interesting to the congregation. He would now and then exclaim, "That's right!" "Good!" "Hit him again!" (meaning the Devil) "Glorious!" "Ah! we shall overcome at last," &c. But notwithstanding all this, and though he so often "snatched a grace beyond the rules of art," a kinder man, or a more genuine Christian never lived. I revere his memory, and from his example I see clearly that a man may be very droll, and very religious, at the same time.

The late Robert Robinson, of Cambridge, was much opposed to the silliness implied in the common use of this awful name. One Saturday afternoon he received a visit from the Rev. Clement Carnifex, who, at that time, lived at "Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there." The following dialogue between these two men will afford a still more striking illustration of these impertinent allusions to the devil:—

Clement Carnifax. I am come from a great distance to hear you preach to-morrow.

Robert Robinson. Then, brother, you shall preach for me.

C. C. O, no, no; I cannot preach in Mr. Robinson's pulpit.

R. R. Why not? my pulpit is a wooden one: is not yours?

C. C. Yes, sir; but I cannot preach to Mr. Robinson's people.

R. R. Why not? my people are like other people—some good—some bad—are not yours?

C. C. Yes, sir.

R. R. Well, then, I dare say the sermons last Sunday at home would be very suitable. What were they?

C. C. Why, in the morning I preached from Esther vii. 9—"Hang him thereon."

R. R. Very well, brother. You had a good opportunity of showing that the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Did you take it up in that light, brother?

C. C. No, sir; I considered Haman as the devil, who is always endeavouring to injure the Lord's people, and would be glad to destroy them.

R. R. Very good, brother; nothing can be more suitable. Here is old Nanny, the pew-opener, at our place; she can never get to meeting in time, for she says that the devil always finds her something or other to do. Then there is old farmer Jones, who lives about three miles off. He says that before he has got half-way to meeting, the devil tells him that somebody is breaking into his barns, and he is obliged to return. Now brother, if you could prove that you have hanged the devil, nothing in the world would be more suitable. That will do for the morning. Now, what is the afternoon subject, brother?

C. C. Why, sir, in the afternoon I preached from 2 Kings, xviii. 36, "Answer him not."

R. R. Very well, brother. You had an opportunity of showing not only that the king's business requires haste, but that it is sometimes good policy not to reveal the secrets of state affairs. Did you handle it in that way, brother?

C. C. No, sir. I endeavoured to show that the devil would be always harrassing and distressing the dear people of God; but the best way was to pay no regard to his temptation. "Answer him not a word."

R. R. Ha! ha! brother; that will never do. Now, in the morning, you see, according to your sermon, you hanged the devil; that was very fortunate; but in the afternoon you brought him to life again. At any rate it must be wrong for these two subjects to follow each other.

This dialogue really took place. For proof of its genuineness, see *The Freeman*, 13.2.'61.

It is not intended by these remarks that all allusions to Satan, in preaching, should be condemned; but it is intended that the subject should never be referred to but in a solemn and impressive manner. At the same time I have no sympathy with those who think it very unpolite to refer to the subject at all. Berridge says:—

"Pulpit lips, like pulpit cushions, are chiefly lined with velvet. Amazing reverence is shown to Satan in the pulpit, it seems the privy closet of his highness. We never hear his name or habitation in a modern sermon, which makes some people fancy that the devil sure is dead, and that hell fire is quite burned out."

LETTER XIV.

PUNS, AND PARODIES, AND STUPID QUESTIONS.

CONNECTED with jocular preaching is the practice of making puns on the word of God. But in no place, and under no circumstances, ought the Bible to be approached in any other than a devout spirit. He that can expose it to merriment is a fool; but he that can expose it to contempt is something worse. The following is an example of something amazingly witty, but amazingly profane at the same time. *Dr. Mountain* is appointed to preach before Charles II, at a time when the *see* of a bishop was vacant. He takes for his text Mark xi. 23, "Whosoever shall say to this *mountain* be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea *(see)*, he shall have whatsoever he saith." I have some more illustrations of the same kind, but, Mr. Hyper, I would give you none of them were it not for the desire I feel to expose the practice of taking these unwarrantable liberties with the word of God.

You told me that the late Dr. Chalmers was a duty-faith man. This is characteristic of your school, to give nicknames to men who may be justly denominated the excellent of the earth. However, Dr. Chalmers, at least occasionally suffered himself to speak too flippantly on subjects connected with religion. Here is a specimen:—

"A Highland clergyman is proceeding to a country house to administer the rite of baptism; but the rain has swollen the burn or river running near the house: he cannot pass it. Under these circumstances, he calls out to the father to bring the child down to the burn-side. Furnishing himself with a wooden scoop, the clergyman stands on one side, and the father, holding out the child as far as he could, stands on the other side of the river. The service is proceeded with till the time arrives for sprinkling

the babe, when he dips the scoop into the water, and flings the contents across, aiming at the baby's face; failing more than once, he calls out to the father, after each new trial, "Weel, hast gotten ony yet?"

In a certain case, but I will not say in what case, the Church of Rome makes use of a squirt for the same purpose,* which of course figures as ridiculously and as unscripturally as the wooden scoop.

I have read of a Frenchman, who, feeling that he had but a few moments to live, requested his lawyer and his doctor to place themselves, one on his right hand and the other on his left, that he might die like our blessed Lord—between two thieves! No doubt even you, Mr. Hyper, are shocked with this piece of profanity, but some of your friends are following hard after this profane example, and consequently are following hard after all that is dark and desolating in the principles of infidelity.

For, let a man take these unwarrantable liberties with the Bible, and he indisposes the mind to receive it as a revelation from God. In defence of following the example of Dr. Mountain, it is urged that it will better enable us to remember that particular text which we honour with a parody or a pun. It will do so; but then we remember the pun as well as the text, and the former better than the latter; or, at least, they become so connected in the mind, that the jocularity of the one destroys the solemnity or sanctity of the other; and this linking together the sacred and the profane is like putting Punch into the pulpit, and binding up the jests of Joe Miller with the truths of the Bible.

Once I described to my fellow students in what manner Latchford† had parodied 2 Cor. xi. 10. After a considerable time had elapsed, 2 Cor. xi. was read at family prayer. The reader on that occasion

* Dr. Southwood Smith. † See Letter XVI.

was equal to most of us with regard to piety, and more than equal to any of us with regard to gravity. He went on well till he came to the 10th verse; then there was a faltering of the voice,—a pause,—a tittering,—and at length the explosion of a loud laugh. The tutor and the tutor's wife were both amazed; they had had no previous acquaintance with Latchford's parody, otherwise their gravity might have given way with that of the students. After this interruption, the reader ran out of the room; the service of the evening was resumed, but no devotional feeling was resumed with it. And the result was shame and confusion to all the parties concerned. The pious and sedate reader of that evening is still living, but ministering among the dead. On that occasion he was visibly affected in spite of himself, and made to feel how a pun on Scripture may destroy all devotional feeling and solemnity of mind. Now, Mr. Hyper, this is, perhaps, a fair specimen of the good which results from taking such liberties, or indeed any liberties with the word of God.*

When nearly thirty years ago, the Reform bill had passed into a law, Jeremy Bentham said on account of it, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." You are shocked at this piece of profanity; but really, Mr. Hyper, I don't see any great difference that there is between the parodies of Latchford and those of Jeremy Bentham. Though walking in different ways they both arrived at the same end, which was that of dishonouring the Bible. I

* The professing part of our audience will much longer retain a witty or low expression than one more serious; so will the wicked part of it, too, and turn it to the disadvantage of religion. —*Thornton to Berridge.*

know that Dr. Cumming is like neither of these extraordinary men; yet he also can be guilty of quibbling or punning upon the word of God. In the fifth chapter of the book of Genesis occur the following names: Adam, Seth, Enos, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah. Now, he really says that these words translated are a revelation of the gospel of Christ. And after making these names—at least some of them—to mean what they were obviously never intended to mean, he says that if you string them altogether they will make the following sentence:—

"To man made in the image of God, substituted by man in a state of misery, full of illumination, the blessed God shall come down instructing him; and his death shall send to the humble consolation."

Nothing can be more arbitrary, or even more outrageous than this piece of linguistic criticism. Had it proceeded from a weak or uninformed mind, I should have said with Hudibras—

> "That Hebrew roots are always found
> To flourish most in barren ground;"

but everybody knows that the mind of Dr. Cumming is neither wanting in information nor strength; yet in this criticism there is no sign of either. If it were worth while, I could easily show that by treating the Hebrew in this way, you may make it say almost anything you please, and anything which is equally plausible or equally puerile with this interpretation of Dr. Cumming.

Your friends who congregate in the Cave of Adullam produce many idle conceits; but I don't know that they are more distinguished in this line than some doctors of divinity or dignitaries of the church. I believe you will admit that your church

is, to a considerable extent, a smoking church. Whether you can see or smell any resemblance in tobacco smoke to the sweet incense of ancient times, I will not pretend to say: that the pipe has been spiritualized, I have not the slightest doubt; and I have not the slightest doubt that where the pipe is, the bottle is not far off; but here is something worthy your consideration, not only with regard to smoking, but also with regard to the fanciful mode of treating the Bible. Once there was a convocation of the clergy of the Greek church,* to consider whether smoking tobacco was a sin or not. After deliberating some time on the question, they came to this conclusion: that getting drunk with brandy was no sin; but that smoking tobacco was a sin, because our Lord said, "Not that which goeth into the mouth (as brandy) defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth (as tobacco smoke) this defileth a man." You will say that this interpretation of a passage in the fifteenth chapter of Matthew is rather queer. It is queer, indeed; but it is not more so than the interpretation of a passage in the fifth chapter of the book of Genesis in a book called, "Redemption draweth nigh."

STUPID QUESTIONS

Are often agitated in your school; and the Cave of Adullam is made to resound with the noise of the respondents. I believe the following may be regarded as fair specimens of this kind:—

1. Did not supralapsarian grace make way for sublapsarian redemption?

2. Is not that man a fool who says that God's

* Histoire de Charles XII.

sovereignty rests not upon his supremacy, but upon his moral character*

3. The Pool of Bethesda had five porches. Did they not represent the five points?

4. Is it not clear that three of the corners of the sheet let down from heaven meant the Trinity? But what did the fourth corner mean?

5. Did Peter and Paul ever walk together arm-in-arm?

6. Was it a leather, linen, or woollen bag that Judas carried? If none of these, what was that bag made of?

7. How many dogs licked the sores of Lazarus?

8. What were the names of those dogs?

9. Did those dogs represent believers, as brother Wharfinger, of Bath, says they did?

10. How many bricks were in the tower of Babel?

11. How many feet of water did Noah's ark draw, when afloat?

Now, I can assure you, that there is nothing in these questions, and nothing in the solution of these questions, which ought to make you uneasy, or make you uncertain, about your acceptance before God. Decide upon them whichever way you will—let one say that the bag which Judas carried was made of leather—let another say that it was made of linen—and let another question both these opinions, and say that it was made of woollen; why should that diversity of opinion give you uneasiness, or make you tremble for the ark of God? You may think more seriously of the matter; and what I consider as so many jokes, you may consider as so many subjects of interesting and even of profitable speculation. Every cave has something curious, either in it or about it, and the Cave of Adullam is no exception

*Earthen Vessel, 12'59.

to this rule. There stands Dr. Nugator, not like D'Israeli, exhibiting the *Curiosities of Literature*, but like a charlatan, exhibiting the curiosities of religion. I know that you are attached to them, though they are nothing better than the gew-gaws and gimcracks of a disordered imagination. Well, I can respect the prejudices or partialities of any weak brother for whom Christ died. But, remember, that while Dr. Nugator is a great authority in the Cave of Adullam, outside that cave there is an authority still greater, which says, "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes."—2 Tim. ii. 23.

LETTER XV.

LACONIC TEXTS AND IMPROMPTU SERMONS.

PAGANINI, to show his cleverness, was accustomed to fiddle on one string; and your friend, to shew his cleverness, plays upon a single word as a text; but then, unlike Paganini, instead of getting excellent music out of it, he gets nothing but idle conceits out of it. I hope you will allow that it is a wretched taste which induces a man to make use of the letters of a single word, as so many pegs on which to hang the usual ideas of a Hyper-calvinistic discourse.

The celebrated sermon of Dr. Dodd on the word *malt*, is no justification of it, because in that case, there was no choice. He was obliged to have a field for a church, a tree for his pulpit, a single word for his text, and certain lewd fellows of the baser sort for his congregation. He was compelled to submit to all this, just as a man is compelled to submit to the

cruel exactions of a set of thieves. But why should you be anxious to preach *à la* Dodd? Where is the necessity of it, or where is the use of it?

You know that on last Whit Monday there was an important gathering at Bridge Street Chapel, Greenwich.* Great was the day; the joy was great; so great indeed, that this Greenwich church cries out, "Rejoice with us at the unspeakable mercy and goodness of our covenant God." On such an occasion it was expected that something unusually good would come from the preacher,—that he would rise above himself,—that he would not only be acceptable to the people, but even great in the sight of the Lord. At length brother Silvester ascends the pulpit, and announces for his text the word "*Onwards!*" Dr. Dodd, with genuine humour, literally divided his "*malt*;" and brother Silvester, with genuine grimace, literally divides his "onwards:" for he says, I shall treat the text thus: O, origin; N, nature; W, warfare; A, armour; R, redemption; D, destiny; and S, song. According to the "Earthern Vessel," the sermon was pleasing and instructive, and elevated in the heart the church's covenant Head. This is possible; but even if it were true, how supremely absurd is it to preach a sermon about Christ with nothing but a gewgaw or a gimcrack for a text! Here is the union of the sublime and the ridiculous with a vengeance.

Now if it were right for brother Silvester to have preached from a single word in the afternoon, it would not have been wrong for brother Silvanus to have followed his example in the evening. Supported by the *venerable* authority which preceded him, he might have said:—

"Dear brethren, in coming towards the chapel this

* "Earthern Vessel, July," '69.

afternoon, I was somewhat startled by one of those rural sounds so common in this, and in all similar localities. The sound is neither solemn nor musical, but rather startling, especially when it takes one by surprise. Two friends from town, Mr. Croaker and Mr. Triton, were with me when I was thus startled; the first thought that it was a sign that perilous times were coming, but the second thought that it was only a sign that rainy weather was coming. You must be anxious to know what sound I refer to; well, without any farther circumlocution or mystification on the subject, I will say that in approaching this chapel I was startled by the braying of an ass. Now, you know, that I am no man-made minister, that is, no minister who pores over the Bible for a text, or who runs over many books to produce a sermon. No, my texts and my sermons are all from above. The fact is, that I know not what I am going to preach from before entering the pulpit; hence that freshness, that savouriness, and even that sublimity, which must fill you with admiration of a man sent from God.

"Now, you will not say that the rural sound to which I have referred was a voice from heaven, yet it directed me to the subject of this evening's discourse, for I reflected that if there are 'sermons in stars, in trees, in stones, and good in 'everything,' there must be something good in the braying of an ass. You know that this afternoon brother Silvester preached from the word '*onwards.*' Besides educing many delightful truths from that expressive word, he might have intended his text as a hint to us ministers, that we should all go onward in the same direction with himself on this great and interesting occasion. Be this as it may, a single word will form the burden of my song, and the basis of this evening's discourse; and now I hesitate not to say that my text is the

word, '*Donkey*' I know that some will question its propriety; they will say, for instance, that it is not in the Bible nor in the dictionary; it is not: but neither is the word *onwards*. Again, a squeamish brother will say, 'I do not relish a single worded text;' but that only proves how much his taste is vitiated, or how little he values the strong meat of our Hyper-Calvinistic establishment. Do you know that the great *Dr. Nugator* has even preached from the fragment of a word? For a long time, and even while memory shall hold her seat, many will remember his most excellent discourse from the syllable, TION, and in what a superior manner he expatiated on predestinaTION, justificaTION, &c. But, once more, as the animal referred to is proverbial for stupidity, some may think it to be out of place at the present time. I am not quite sure of that; at any rate I have heard some things here, which lead me to an opposite conclusion; but notwithstanding all objections to the contrary 'I now say, 'Up goes the donkey.'

"However, I hope that this exhibition will not divert you from that happy course so happily inaugurated by our brother Silvester, this afternoon. You know, that on all great occasions, we should get out of the old jog trot routine of plain and ordinary men. Some of the old school might have preferred the word 'eternity,' to the word 'donkey,' as a text. Well, I am ready to admit that the former word is susceptible of more profitable remark, than the latter word; but, then it would have produced no grinning, no amusement, and no exalted notion of the ingenuity of the preacher. Now, no sooner had I introduced my donkey, than I saw a smile play upon the faces of the juvenile members of the congregation. It is true that some, who are

not juveniles, hanged down their heads like bulrushes when I named the text; but then, I must remind those worthies, that a sermon in the present day must contain something odd, or something fitted to make the people laugh.

"But, without further introductory remarks, I shall proceed to discuss *this* 'donkey,' in the following order.—*First*, I shall consider it as a whole, *Secondly*, as consisting of several parts. *Thirdly*, as reading a very appropriate lecture to those persons whose stupidity very much resembles that of the animal under consideration. With regard to the first part of the discourse, little need be said; it speaks for itself; but the second part of the discourse is not to be so summarily disposed of. Here, I suspect, you will see my ingenuity, and derive your own edification. The following is the division of the donkey's parts:—D, delightful; O, opportunities; N, now; K, kindly; E, encourage; Y, you. But, before I proceed to the *third* part, I must guard you against an error into which our brother fell this afternoon. You know that he spoke much of the assistance he derived from God the Holy Ghost, in discoursing on the word 'onwards;' but his friend Silvanus cannot do this, in discoursing on the word 'donkey,' because, such an assumption would seem to border on the profane, which is far worse than bordering on the ridiculous. Now, with this observation premised, I have no doubt, that with a little ingenuity on my part, and with a good deal of patience on your part, our treat this evening will be quite equal to that of this afternoon. I feel it, however, necessary to add, that as I see several brethren present, not remarkable for common sense, I shall omit the third part of my discourse on this interesting occasion."

Now, Mr Hyper, you may say that I am guilty of

ridiculing brother Silvester in writing such a sermon for brother Silvanus. No, I am not; I would ridicule no weak brother. I have not even given you Mr. Silvester's real name, but your friend Mr. Linguist will see some relation in that I have given him to the one which actually belongs to him. I know you don't care for Mr. Linguist, but without him you would have had no Bible to preach from.

a. But while I would disclaim offensive personality, I would not disclaim the use of ridicule in a case like that to which I have just referred. Indeed, it is the only weapon with which such a glaring piece of absurdity can be properly assailed, or effectually destroyed.

b. It is good rightly to divide the word of truth, but to cut up a word into separate letters for the good of the church, and for the glory of God, is more consistent with a simpleton than with a "workman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

c. I do think that if any brother gets into the pulpit with the intention of following the example of Brother Silvester, that the sight, or the sound, or even the thought of the "donkey" of Brother Silvanus would frighten him out of that intention. This would be a happy result, and would fully justify my strictures on the subject.

IMPROMPTU SERMONS

Are always at a premium, and eagerly sought after in the Hyper-market. The ministers likewise who deal in these articles most extensively are counted worthy of double honour, and are always selected to preach anniversary sermons, and to be made prominent on great public occasions. But you say, how can this be? or what connection is there between preaching Hyper-Calvinistically and preaching ex-

temporaneously? The case is this: most of your preachers have an overweening conceit of their own abilities, or of their high character as chosen vessels of the Lord. You have heard that extremes meet, and the fact is, that your High men very much resemble those Pharisees who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, especially with regard to the extemporaneous powers of utterance. Thus your friend Palmer says—

"I am not in the habit of cramming for the Sunday's ebullition. What toiling to make a sermon! what hunting for ideas among the pile of dead men's brains! what an ado about the manufacture of a sermon! Common preaching is too much like modern food for cattle, a compound of all manner of things."* But as for me, you will know that I am no letter preacher. I speak from the inspiration of the moment; not as memory, not as learning, not as imitation, but as God the Holy Ghost shall give me utterance."

Now, observe, that I do not deny that a good man often does speak, and speak sweetly and profitably, too, from the inspiration of the Spirit. But, Mr. Hyper, be assured of this, that no man speaks in this manner who makes a boast of it. No, no; it is of the very nature of the Spirit's influence to make a man humble, and even to make him esteem another better than himself. Great men never think themselves great, nor ever take any pains to show themselves off! I once observed to Mr. Jay, that Mr. Ultra, who was coming to preach in Bath on Sunday, never failed to inform the congregation that he was quite ignorant of his sermon and even of his text, till after he had entered the pulpit. "Ah!" said Mr. Jay, "don't you know what that means? These men are well up in two or three sermons, and they don't know which of these two or three they shall select for that

* J. Palmer, Baptist Minister.

particular occasion; so that, in one sense, what they say is true, but in another sense, what they say is false, for they wish the people to understand that they never thought of the sermon before. Thus for the sake of personal vanity they are guilty of falsehood, or at least, of equivocation in the service of God!"

But after all, why make such a wonderment about an extemporaneous sermon? Who does not know what a Hyper will say upon any text in the Bible? Who does not know that he has but one sermon, and that his ministerial course is like that of a blind horse in a mill, always the same, or varied only by those jokes and comical expressions so often made use of in the Hyper school? How supremely ridiculous was it for Mr. Smith, of Zoar Chapel, to say, and even to publish—"I find it as hard a matter to get a text to preach from as to create a world; my very lips quiver when I go into the pulpit without a text." I once knew a minister, who was accustomed to make every text in the Bible illustrate, explain, or confirm what is called the four-fold ministry of the apostolic church; and your preachers make every text to illustrate, explain, or confirm, the doctrine of these five points so much venerated in the Hyper-calvinistic church.

Thus, Mr. Hyper, I have written, certainly not about the "things which accompany salvation," but about the things which accompany the Hyper-jocular preaching of it. Where this mode is adopted there will be contempt of learning; there will be idle conceit; there will be arrogance; there will be unseemly allusions to the devil; there will be self-laudation; there will be almost every thing which can render preaching unlike that of the first Apostles of the Lamb!

LETTER XVI.

JOCULAR PREACHING.—APOSTLES OF IT.

To Mr. Savory, of Lady Huntingdon's Connexion.

You told me that you were rather partial to the Hyper mode of preaching the gospel. Well, I think you must have a bad taste, but I don't think you must have a bad heart on that account. On the contrary, Hyper partialities may, in some cases, well consist with the character of a holy man of God. But you remember, that when I told you that Mr. *Gourmet* would take nothing but what was spicy or highly seasoned, you remarked that he must have a vitiated taste and a feeble state of health. Besides, now I think of it, you really have not in your connexion the genuine article of Hyper-preaching. You have occasionally something like it, but not the thing itself; for where it is genuine it is always connected with jocularity; and your ministers are generally too serious and too far removed from infidelity to indulge in this quality. Now, to show you how often Hyperism and attempts at witticism go together, I shall call your attention to some great names in the Hyper-Calvinistic world—men, indeed, of a former generation, but whose writings still continue to give a tone and character to the popular preaching of the present day. Among these, the name of

LATCHFORD

is most conspicuous. His ultra divinity and his pulpit drollery were seldom equalled, and certainly

never surpassed, by any other preacher, either of ancient or of modern times.

Many years ago, and while the present century was yet in its teens, I formed part of a knot of Sunday-school teachers, earnestly engaged in discussing the merits of certain popular divines, as Dr. Collyer, Adam Clark, Alexander Fletcher, Rowland Hill, when one of our number exclaimed, that all these might go overboard for anything that he cared to the contrary; he had found out the only man in London, who preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. This remark took me by surprise: I was then in early life, and had scarcely heard any other ministers than those accustomed to preach in the Adelphi Chapel. I really ran about repeating what I had heard, that there was only one man in all London who preached the true gospel. I knew not at that time that this was a piece of cant common to all those who, like the Pharisees, "trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others."

My curiosity was excited, and I was determined to go and hear this wonderful man. And truly he was a wonderful man; for so much rash divinity, so much pulpit drollery, so much offensive personality, and even so much gross obscenity, were never combined in the same person.

I entered the chapel at a time when the minister was in prayer; but at first I could hardly decide whether it was preaching or praying I was listening to. In the exercise there were so many quotations from the Bible, and from the Pilgrim's Progress, and so many commentaries, and critical, or rather, cynical remarks, that it appeared more like an instruction to the people, than a supplication to God. The manner of addressing the Almighty was very colloquial and extremely irreverent. But at length the

sermon came. O, such a sermon! Such was the drollery of it that I became convulsed with laughter; it was the first time that I had ever been so affected in a place of worship. I had been accustomed to hear Henry Lacey and John Hyatt, whose sermons were peculiarly solemn and impressive; but here was the very reverse of all this; I could scarcely think it real. The pulpit levity made such havoc with all my serious feelings, that I tittered like others, and like others was ashamed of myself for doing so. The spirit was willing to be serious, but the flesh was weak. I struggled with myself, yea I was angry with myself, but all was of no use; I was fairly overcome. After contending for a long time with stifled emotion, the explosion came, and I burst out into a loud laugh.

This was quite a new event in my life; something seemed to be awakened, which up to that period had lain dormant in my soul. From earliest childhood I had been extremely grave, and instead of laughing in a place of worship, I had scarcely ever laughed at all. I will therefore candidly confess that being on that day under my first impressions, I might have been more deeply, or more risibly affected than some old stagers who were sitting near me, and who had been long accustomed to these pulpit escapades. I could perceive, however, that even they were not entirely unmoved by that which so deeply affected me. At the time I really thought that the indecorum of which I had been guilty would have procured for me a summary ejection from the chapel, and a good cuffing into the bargain. However, I got clear off, for not a saint wagged his head, and not a sinner lifted up his hand against me.

Now I know that you are ready to ask what was there in that morning's discourse which could pro-

duce so much merriment in me, and in the rest of the congregation? In replying to that question, I think it right to premise, that I have a most distinct recollection of the preacher's words on that occasion. The sermon consisted of a kind of exposition of the third chapter of Isaiah. Some of the remarks were indelicate, some were laughable, and the whole of them were extremely irreverent. I recollect that he placed a finger on the nasal organ, while repeating verse 21, "the rings and the nose jewels." But here is the passage which affected me most, verse 4, "'And I will give you children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them.' Is not this literally fulfilled in the present day? Doesn't any monkey in a black coat, get up into the pulpit to lead the Lord's anointed? You say that I ought not to be so hard upon these fellows. What! see God robbed of his glory and not cry out, stop thief! stop thief! (calling out at the top of his voice just as though at that moment he saw the thief escaping by the door at the other end of the chapel; so loud was the voice, and so energetic was the manner, that I instinctively turned round to look in that direction for some pickpocket who was making his escape). You don't know how exasperated I am against these thieves! I could split this pulpit, ah! and their brains too, if I had them here!"

This, I can assure you, is a *verbatim* report of what I heard on that occasion. I can write down the words, but I can give no idea, at least, no adequate idea of the preacher's manner. It was irresistibly comic; my eyes flowed with tears while witnessing it, but they flowed not from a feeling of godly sorrow, or from a feeling of holy joy, but from a feeling of the ridiculous. A pretty feeling indeed to be awakened, or to be indulged in, when in the

house of God. In Mr. Silver's collection of hymns is found one by Latchford, entitled, "The lot is cast," which is nothing better than a piece of dark and dreary fatalism, containing no praise to God, and no consolation to his people. How good men can sing such a hymn I know not: but I do know that it is characteristic of preachers of the hyper-school, to entertain the gloomiest thoughts of God, while they are as merry and as amusing as a harlequin in speaking of his ways to men. It is true that Latchford belongs to a former age; but so much is the desire for religious excitement, or rather for religious amusement, on the increase, that if this man were to appear in the present day, there is no church, and no chapel, and no Exeter Hall, which would be spacious enough to contain the multitudes that would flock to hear him, to honour him, and even to hold him up as the first preacher of the age. But more of this by and by.

As a set off to Latchford's drollery, it was urged, that he said many good things. I know that he did, but at the same time he said so many frivolous things, so many jocular things, and even so many profane things, as utterly to destroy all solemn and devotional feeling in the worship of God. Here are some of his gems, or specimens of his ordinary remarks:—

"We don't owe Moses a farthing; if he come into your house, chuck him out of window."

"If there should be any dancing in heaven, I shall have Moll Magdalen for a partner!"

"I have been thinking of the 'communion of saints.' A friend of mine has published some remarks to prove that this communion may be maintained without personal intercourse. You may read those remarks if you like; and if you don't like, you may let it alone."

"Don't go skulking; heads up! heads up!" (at the same time crying out as though he was the drill-master of a company of rifle volunteers.)

"Paul said, 'No one shall stop this boasting in all the region of Achaia;' and I'll take pretty good care that none shall stop my boasting in all the region of London!" (said with indescribable drollery.)

Speaking of some Old Testament character, who is called a perfect man, he exclaimed:—

"Why, some say that this was not Jesus Christ; and I am told that even old Huntington himself was of the same opinion. I am really shocked. Lord, what is man!"

"And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts."—Ps. lxxviii. 66.

But I will not write down what he was accustomed to say on this and on similar passages of Scripture. His remarks were obscene enough to make a whole congregation rise up in honest indignation at the impudence of the man who could utter them. It is not long since that I was conversing with a minister,* who heard him make these remarks. But I would not have made even the slightest allusion to them, but that I am anxious to remind you of the important fact, that in Antinomian preaching there is not only no reverence but no decency, and that it seems to say that the grace of God leads to licentiousness, and that we should continue in sin in order that grace may abound.

Latchford was intimate with Dr. Hawker, whom he familiarly called Robert, when speaking of him to his congregation. For example: he would say, "I had a letter from Robert this morning." "The other day I was looking in at a picture shop, in Cheapside, when who should tap me on the shoulder but Robert, saying to me, 'Keep your eyes off from vanity;' to which I replied, 'Then I must keep them off from you.'" Dr. Hawker was not a coarse man. He had weapons of satire at his command; but they

* Rev. Mr. Balch.

were of a finer polish and of a keener edge than those of his friend Latchford. At what he called yea and nay ministers, he could sneer as bitterly as though he were an irreligious man. He was often in the field of controversy, but he never came into it clothed with humility as with a garment; but often with an overweening conceit of superior discernment, and even of superior power to make his adversary lick the dust. It is said that he exalted Christ; and so he did; but only in part; he exalted him as a crucified Saviour, but not as a commanding Saviour. He was sufficiently doctrinal and experimental, but he was not sufficiently practical—he was not sufficiently guarded in his expressions; for he would often say, "And you, the dear children of God, who are yet in your sins." Though a good man himself, yet there was a tendency in his preaching to lull the conscience, and to induce the belief that the great design for which the Son of God came down and died upon the cross, was to release the elect from wholesome restraint and moral obligation, so that a man might be a great scoundrel and a dear child of God at the same time.

LETTER XVII.

HUNTINGTON AND HIS SUCCESSORS.

NOT more remarkable was William Cobbett in the political world than was William Huntington in the religious world. Both were truly original; both arrived at a position of honour and renown, but without coming to it by the ordinary routes or prescribed forms; both had the feelings of a despot; both could play like a monkey, and snarl like a dog; both had light, but it was the light of a firebrand and not of a luminary; and both were like Ishmael, who had "his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him." By his own party, however, Huntington was completely idolized; not more obsequious is a Catholic to the pope than were the Huntingtonians obsequious towards their chief; and in those cases where Huntington differed from Paul, the latter was not considered so good an authority as the former. I do not say that this opinion was held by the whole of Huntington's followers; but that it was held by some of them, and even published by some of them, I have not the slightest doubt.

Everybody knows that this man was once a coal-heaver. Now, as coal-heaving is a useful occupation, it did him no dishonour, and neither qualified him, nor disqualified him, for preaching the gospel. But he often boasted of it, and

contended that his coal-sack divinity was vastly superior to that of the clerical gown. Some thought him very humble, while others thought him very vain, in doing so. He was evidently a conceited man; never thinking that he was inferior to other preachers, or that he was less than the least of all saints. Through what is called a lucky matrimonial alliance, he was enabled to ride about in a carriage and four, and being ever ready at spiritual allusions, he was accustomed to say, that he might ride his four horses to death before he could find four men who preached the gospel, "When," said he, "old Romaine* was alive, I might pop in and hear a gospel sermon, but now he is gone, I am left alone."

True to the instincts of Hyper-calvinism, he could make use of ungenerous ridicule towards good ministers of Jesus Christ. That amiable man and distinguished philosopher, Dr. Priestly, had a brother, an Independent minister, named Timothy Priestly. He wrote a book called "A Looking Glass for Professors." Huntington made game of it and likewise of its author, by writing a reply to it, entitled, "Timothy Priestly shaved by the reflexion of his own Looking Glass." This book was not only a rich treat for the Huntingtonians, but also a striking illustration of the fact, that buffoonery and Antinomianism are very nearly allied, and that grinning and praying are not

* Here comes one with quite elastic step, his eye is keen, his thin, but strongly lined face is surmounted by a grey wig, somewhat smitten by the hand of time; his plain and certainly not polished manners, are perhaps in keeping with the blue suit, and coarse blue yarn stockings, in which he is usually seen. He cannot stop for all the elaborate courses of life, for manifold cares and duties eat up his time which he is bent on using wisely. This was the Rev. William Romaine.

in the Antinomian school, incompatible with each other. Here is another of Huntington's gems:—

If I were to take my black cat into the pulpit, and to pinch her tail, she would utter sounds quite as melodious, and quite as edifying, to the dear people of God, as the preaching of Roberts, of Cooper, and of other beardless boys.

He was accustomed to append to his name the letters "S. S." What is their origin, what is their meaning, and what is their superiority to other letters of the Alphabet, for which other dissenting ministers show a most decided partiality, he thus explains:—

You know that we clergy are very fond of titles; for, if they don't make us greater, they make us more remarkable than ordinary men. Now, I have not £14 to buy the dissenting title of D.D., so I could not become a Doctor of Divinity for want of cash. I could not become M.A. for want of learning. I am contented then to fly for refuge to S.S., the meaning of which is, sinner saved.

The unconcealed satire of these remarks is not, perhaps, entirely uncalled for; but I am aware that many of the stupid things he uttered might have been left buried in oblivion, had they not been illustrative of that bitter spirit, or of that jocular spirit, which is engendered by the Antinomian system of divinity. You know that my object is to shew its tendency to levity and irreverence. Now, the tendency of a system may always be inferred from the characters of the chief promoters of it. From the seriousness of Peter, or Paul, you infer the true spirit of Christianity; from the levity of Latchford, Huntington, and others of the same school, you infer the true spirit of Antinomianism.

After his death, a whole host of preachers sprang up to perpetuate the Gospel according to Huntington, and likewise his mode of preaching it. But, as he

who walks after another must always be behind him, so none of these men ever came up to the original. There never could be more than one Huntington in the world. But they had sat at his feet, and had imbibed his spirit, so that they became qualified in a certain degree, to publish, and to keep alive, the crotchets of this remarkable man. The last of these was John Vinal, of Lewes, who died a few months ago. Once I attended his chapel; the prayer was excellent; the sermon was twaddle, and his manner in the pulpit was somewhat ludicrous. True to the spirit, and true to the slang of his school, he said many droll things, and assured the people that they would get no gospel at Lewes, unless they came to hear old John Vinal!

All the preachers of this stamp trod, as far as they could, in the footsteps of their great prototype. They had plenty of foolish talking and of that jesting which is not convenient. They would frequently refer to domestic scenes of the most trivial kind, not so much that the dear people might know how things were going on within the sacred enclosure of private life, but that they might better know the truth which these scenes were intended to illustrate and to explain. "This morning," said a most popular preacher, "while my wife was putting on my stockings, I"—but I forbear, you may imagine the rest, and however ludicrous the thing is that you imagine, it will be quite as profitable as what the preacher actually said on that occasion. Like their great leader, they too often became the illiberal expositors of the providence of God. One of them is struck with paralysis, and he hesitates not to say that it is a divine judgment upon him for having admitted a Baptist minister into his pulpit. Like Dr. Ferrum, of Camberwell, they would also predict with

the greatest confidence, what was to come to pass in these last days, and the judgment of Sodom, and of Gomorrah, was to alight on those who were tinctured with Arminianism, or with any other *ism*, that was opposed to the dogmas and ineffable absurdities of the Hyper-calvinistic school!

Excepting in some city of Zoar, or some Cave of Adullam, the name of Huntington is now of no authority, and is never referred to, but as a religious curiosity, more fitted to amuse than to edify the people of God. His fame, resting principally on certain accidental or adventitious circumstances, could have no fragrant, or no lasting remembrance, among the excellent of the earth; but the names which he ridiculed, or held up to scorn, still live, and will be had in everlasting remembrance. In my next letter, I shall have something more to say of Wm. Huntington, and I shall introduce you to him, while sitting in his study, and exhibiting, it is true, the eccentricity and even the unloveliness of his character, but at the same time exhibiting some of the outward and visible signs of a holy man of God.

LETTER XVIII.

GADSBY, WARBURTON, AND COCKLES.

WHO has not heard of the late William Gadsby, of Manchester, and who has not associated with his name all the errors, and all the antics, connected with pulpit drollery? You say that he was a good man for all that; and I own that there is no doubt of it; but he was a mistaken man, because he was a Hyper and a joker, and the latter on account of the former;—another illustration of the tendency of the ultra divinity toward fun and levity, in the discussion of sacred things. In his case, there was plenty of ungenerous ridicule, with regard to the preaching and the labours of good men; even Dr. Watts did not escape the shafts of his ridicule; of his hymns Gadsby could say, "that they gave out as legal a sound as though they had been forged in a certain Foundry."*

I once heard him in Liverpool; he manifested great zeal against Arminianism, lashing it most severely, and making the holders of that creed cry out, especially the more sensitive part of them. You think, perhaps, that he did it justly; I know that he did it right merrily, for there was a great amount of giggling, and scarcely a dry eye in the place. But this absence of dryness, was occasioned not by

* A building that once stood in Moorfields, in which the Methodists assembled for worship. What the Tabernacle was to Whitfield, the Foundry was to Wesley.

feelings of sorrow, but by feelings of joy; for the people were glad to see how this champion could make the Arminian giant lick the dust. I know that among his co-religionists, Wm. Gadsby was deservedly popular; he rose higher and higher in their esteem, till at length he gained an elevation as high and as influential as that occupied by Dr. Magnus or Dr. Mikros of the present day. But his *debut* at Manchester gave little or no promise of that eminence to which he afterwards attained. It is thus described by one of his most ardent admirers:—

"I think I shall never forget the first time I heard him. When I got to the chapel, I thought to myself what a gloomy miserable place this is! and as the people came in, I felt such a hatred rise up in my heart against them, as I never felt against any people before. Nay, so much so, that I was just ready to take up my hat and walk out, when Mr. Gadsby got into the pulpit. I was struck by surprise, to see so poor and mean looking a fellow (as I thought him) attempt to preach. I despised him in my very soul, and thought he looked like an ignorant fool that had no common sense. He rose, and gave out a hymn, but it was in so drawling a way that I verily believed he could not read. O how the devil rose up in my heart; I even wished that some one would cause a disturbance in the chapel; for I thought that I could kick Gadsby out of it, with all the pleasure in the world; I hated the sound of his voice: he appeared to stutter and to stammer, as though he could hardly get a word out of his mouth. My soul boiled with rage, and I called myself a thousand fools for coming to hear such a fool; when he had finished his prayer, which was very short, I thought to myself, Poor creature, thou canst never preach, I am sure; I wished he would be obliged to tell the people so. While reading his text, I dropped my head and tried to go to sleep; he then made a little pause, and I looked up to see what he was about, and he was looking all round the chapel, and rolling his eyes in such a way that I really thought him crazy. Beginning his sermon, all my prejudice was knocked down at a blow."

Thus wrote John Warburton, one of Gadsby's *protegés*. In this case, the disciple followed in the footsteps of the master, with regard to the oddity of

his preaching, and his ungenerous ridicule of other good men. He could say:—

"I believe there are hundreds of ministers of the present day, who would cut a miserable figure if it were not for other men's works, made ready to their hand, and I fear that it costs them more quires of paper in writing out their discourses, in making out their heads and tails, divisions and subdivisions, and applications, than ever it costs them in groans and tears to God. One text the gentlemen of the cloth might quote at the end of every sentence, 'Alas, master, it was borrowed.'

Now, I am not so much disposed to question the truth of these remarks as I am disposed to question the spirit of banter and of self-sufficiency in which they are uttered. Paul used no banter when he said, "for many walk, of whom I now tell you, weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." John Warburton did not like borrowing; but did he never borrow anything from Gadsby? Are there any ministers who live more upon borrowing than those of the Hyper-calvinistic school? And what is their preaching but a kind of balderdash, made up of odds and ends, and principally collected from the *cuisines* of Dr. Crisp, and Dr. Saltmarsh, and others of the same stamp, who spent their time in providing high-seasoned meats, and even intoxicating drinks, for the dear people of God?

Warburton once had an interview with Huntington; to that interview he looked forward with anxiety, for a considerable time, and afterwards reflected upon it as one of the principal events of his life. The following dialogue will explain the origin of it, the nature of it, and at the same time will bring out some of the peculiarities, and also some of the excellencies, of both these remarkable men:—

PART I.

*Richard Hurd.** Why, brother Warburton, what's the matter? You hold down your head like a bulrush this morning; but never mind, here is a book that will do you good.

John Warburton. What is the title of the book, and who is the author of it?

H. It is called "The Kingdom of Heaven taken by Prayer," and written by one Huntington a coalheaver. Will you read it?

W. Not I, indeed; it is nothing but some Arminian rubbish. The very title tells me what it is!

H. Ah! that is the old story, "can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" But I am sure you will like it. I know your character, and I admire your views: indeed I am so much of your way of thinking, that like my namesake, I have been called a Warburtonian.

W. Well, I will give it a trial: but for the present, I must say good morning.

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John Warburton. Liked it! why I can never explain a thousandth part of my feelings in reading it. Sometimes I was crying, sometimes laughing, and sometimes blessing and praising God. I hardly knew whether I was in the body or out of it.

H. You don't think now, that the book is nothing but Arminian rubbish.

W. Oh, no, 'tis a blessed book, and I now make a solemn vow, that if ever I go to London, I will call on Huntington, and tell him what benefit I have derived from it.

H. This will be of no use, for the author has a great dislike to strangers, and a particular prejudice against Baptists.

W. This is rather discouraging; but come what may, I must perform unto the Lord my vows. Good morning.

PART III.

Richard Hurd. Oh, Warburton, is that you? I believe it is; but time, that greatest of all innovators, has done so much to you that I scarcely knew you again; but I care not so much for the

* Not Bishop Hurd, who wrote a "Dialogue" and a Commentary on the Epistle of *Horace*, on the art of poetry.

LETTER XVIII.

GADSBY, WARBURTON, AND COCKLES.

WHO has not heard of the late William Gadsby, of Manchester, and who has not associated with his name all the errors, and all the antics, connected with pulpit drollery? You say that he was a good man for all that; and I own that there is no doubt of it; but he was a mistaken man, because he was a Hyper and a joker, and the latter on account of the former;—another illustration of the tendency of the ultra divinity toward fun and levity, in the discussion of sacred things. In his case, there was plenty of ungenerous ridicule, with regard to the preaching and the labours of good men; even Dr. Watts did not escape the shafts of his ridicule; of his hymns Gadsby could say, "that they gave out as legal a sound as though they had been forged in a certain Foundry."*

I once heard him in Liverpool; he manifested great zeal against Arminianism, lashing it most severely, and making the holders of that creed cry out, especially the more sensitive part of them. You think, perhaps, that he did it justly; I know that he did it right merrily, for there was a great amount of giggling, and scarcely a dry eye in the place. But this absence of dryness, was occasioned not by

* A building that once stood in Moorfields, in which the Methodists assembled for worship. What the Tabernacle was to Whitfield, the Foundry was to Wesley.

feelings of sorrow, but by feelings of joy; for the people were glad to see how this champion could make the Arminian giant lick the dust. I know that among his co-religionists, Wm. Gadsby was deservedly popular; he rose higher and higher in their esteem, till at length he gained an elevation as high and as influential as that occupied by Dr. Magnus or Dr. Mikros of the present day. But his *debut* at Manchester gave little or no promise of that eminence to which he afterwards attained. It is thus described by one of his most ardent admirers:—

"I think I shall never forget the first time I heard him. When I got to the chapel, I thought to myself what a gloomy miserable place this is! and as the people came in, I felt such a hatred rise up in my heart against them, as I never felt against any people before. Nay, so much so, that I was just ready to take up my hat and walk out, when Mr. Gadsby got into the pulpit. I was struck by surprise, to see so poor and mean looking a fellow (as I thought him) attempt to preach. I despised him in my very soul, and thought he looked like an ignorant fool that had no common sense. He rose, and gave out a hymn, but it was in so drawling a way that I verily believed he could not read. O how the devil rose up in my heart; I even wished that some one would cause a disturbance in the chapel; for I thought that I could kick Gadsby out of it, with all the pleasure in the world; I hated the sound of his voice: he appeared to stutter and to stammer, as though he could hardly get a word out of his mouth. My soul boiled with rage, and I called myself a thousand fools for coming to hear such a fool; when he had finished his prayer, which was very short, I thought to myself, Poor creature, thou canst never preach, I am sure; I wished he would be obliged to tell the people so. While reading his text, I dropped my head and tried to go to sleep; he then made a little pause, and I looked up to see what he was about, and he was looking all round the chapel, and rolling his eyes in such a way that I really thought him crazy. Beginning his sermon, all my prejudice was knocked down at a blow."

Thus wrote John Warburton, one of Gadsby's *protegés*. In this case, the disciple followed in the footsteps of the master, with regard to the oddity of

his preaching, and his ungenerous ridicule of other good men. He could say:—

"I believe there are hundreds of ministers of the present day, who would cut a miserable figure if it were not for other men's works, made ready to their hand, and I fear that it costs them more quires of paper in writing out their discourses, in making out their heads and tails, divisions and subdivisions, and applications, than ever it costs them in groans and tears to God. One text the gentlemen of the cloth might quote at the end of every sentence, 'Alas, master, it was borrowed.'

Now, I am not so much disposed to question the truth of these remarks as I am disposed to question the spirit of banter and of self-sufficiency in which they are uttered. Paul used no banter when he said, "for many walk, of whom I now tell you, weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." John Warburton did not like borrowing; but did he never borrow anything from Gadsby? Are there any ministers who live more upon borrowing than those of the Hyper-calvinistic school? And what is their preaching but a kind of balderdash, made up of odds and ends, and principally collected from the *cuisines* of Dr. Crisp, and Dr. Saltmarsh, and others of the same stamp, who spent their time in providing high-seasoned meats, and even intoxicating drinks, for the dear people of God?

Warburton once had an interview with Huntington; to that interview he looked forward with anxiety, for a considerable time, and afterwards reflected upon it as one of the principal events of his life. The following dialogue will explain the origin of it, the nature of it, and at the same time will bring out some of the peculiarities, and also some of the excellencies, of both these remarkable men:—

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outer man, as for the inner man of the heart. How has it fared with you these many years?

John Warburton. The last time you saw me was at Manchester; since then, I have been brought through deep waters, and now I am the pastor of a Baptist Church, at Rochdale.

H. Do you remember a vow that you made some years ago to see Huntington? Did you ever perform that vow?

W. I did; I saw him the year before he died.

H. What, did you go all the way to London only to see him?

W. Oh, no! I was begging for Hope Chapel, Rochdale, and while thus engaged in that great city, the text came powerfully to my mind, "Pay thy vows to the Lord."

H. Did it cost you much to pay that vow?

W. Very much, indeed; I felt in my mind a great deal of going back, for I thought that I was such an ignorant fool, and what would he think of such a fool as I going to see him. But at length the visit was paid to Huntington, and the vow was paid to the Lord.

H. Well, you must let me know how this was accomplished.

W. I said to the person at whose house I was staying, Come, you must show me the residence of Mr. Huntington.

H. Did he readily consent to do so?

W. No! he said everything he could against it; saying that Huntington would never talk with me, especially if he knew I was a Baptist.

H. How did you reply to all these objections?

W. I had but one reply, and that was, "I must pay my vows to the Lord;" and in fact, that I should have no peace of mind till I had done so.

H. Did he go with you?

W. He went with me as far as the gate of the house, and there he left me. This house was situated, if I recollect right, at a place called Hermes Hill, Pentonville.

H. How did you feel when your friend left you.

W. Miserable enough; I rang the bell, and when the footman came to the door, I requested an interview with Mr. Huntington, if agreeable.

H. Footmen are generally saucy fellows; how did this one behave to you?

W. His behaviour was pretty good; but he asked me my name, whence I came, and whether Mr. Huntington had any knowledge of me? I said no, but that I should be glad to speak to him a few minutes, if agreeable. He bade me follow him to the front door, and said he would go and ask if I might see him.

H. Did you feel comfortable while he was gone?

W. Oh, what darkness came upon me, and trembling of body, during his absence: I felt a secret wish that a message might come that it was not convenient for him to see me. But when the man came back and said that I was to follow him, and when at length I found myself in the study, and in the presence of the great man, I shook in every limb.

H. How did the appearance of Huntington strike you?

W. The good old man was sitting at his table, with his cap on his head, and his Bible before him, and he looked just like the old prophet Elijah, in my eyes.

H. How can that be? You never saw the prophet Elijah, but let that pass; what did you say to him?

W. I was so shaken that I could hardly tell what to stammer out; at last, however, I said that I had read his book—"The Kingdom of Heaven taken by Prayer,"—many years ago; that it had been a great blessing to my soul, and that I had made a vow that if ever I came where he was, I would tell him of it.

H. What did he reply to all this?

W. The dear old man never spoke a word, nor lifted up his head; and I sat so confused and shut up, that I could not tell what to say, and for a minute or two not a word was uttered. At last, I spoke and said, it is a mercy that we are poor sinners.

H. Did this remark draw forth any reply?

W. Yes, the old man lifted up his head and said, "There are many sinners who know nothing of the matter." "Yes," I tremblingly replied, "I believe there are;" then I hobbled out something or another. "But it is a mercy if the Lord has taught us to know if we are poor lost sinners."

H. Did he reply to this?

W. The dear old man lifted up his head again, and looked me right in the face, and I felt as if his look would have knocked me right off the chair I was sitting on. He repeated, "There are many poor lost sinners who know nothing of the matter," and down he dropped his head again.

H. This must have made you drop yours, I should think.

W. Poor, ignorant, blind fool, I sat, sweating and trembling, and did not know what to say; but blessed be the dear Comforter, he shone into my heart, and I answered to the good old man's satisfaction. He looked up and said, "What dost thou know of the love of God? What is it, and what are its effects?" Then he dropped down his head again, but I persevered, and told him all my experience.

H. How did he receive it?

W. O, what a change came over his countenance; he looked up with tears running down his cheeks, and blessed God for what he had taught me.

H. Did he ask you why you came to London?

W. No! but I told him, and that I was the unworthy pastor of a little Baptist Church at Rochdale; that I was begging for the chapel, and that I had no desire of seeing him for the sake of money, but for the sake of the truth.

H. Did he give you permission to beg among his people?

W. The dear old man told me that they had just paid a great deal of money for his chapel, so that he could not think of sending a beggar among his people: but he opened his table-drawer and scraped up all the silver he had in it, and poured it into my hands, and said, "I give you this for your family."

H. You have told me how you got into his study; now just tell me how you got out of it.

W. I was going to put out my hand to shake hands, but I was checked by the thought that he might think me too bold. I blessed him in the name of the Lord, and was going out of the room, but he stopped me and said, "Let us shake hands at parting." He did so most cordially, and added, "May the Lord God of Abraham bless thee and go with thee."

It must be confessed, that in this interview Huntington appears not only as an eccentric man, but also as a godly man; and he was so, notwithstanding all his vagaries and remarkable crotchets. The fact is, that before his death, his character became considerably improved; there was not so much of that bitter sarcasm and scurrilous jesting, which marked the earlier part of his ministerial career.

The manner in which Huntington treated Warburton, powerfully recalls to my mind the manner in which I was once treated by the Rev. Mr. Cockles.* This minister was known all over the country, and was, in fact, one of the most celebrated men of the day. But alas! he suffered himself, at least, occasionally, to be very droll and jocular in the pulpit. I called upon him one evening, at a time when I

* Un synonime.

was about to enter a Dissenting academy. Introduced into his room, I saw him sitting at the fireplace, wearing a red night-cap, with a short poker in his hand, one end of which rested on the hob, while the other end supported his head in a reclining posture. For a long time he kept me standing, and never uttered a word; at last he said, "snuff the candle." I looked for the snuffers, but none were to be found. He then said, "use the tongs." I did so; but being near-sighted, my nose came into close proximity with the candle, while I was holding the tongs by their lower end. Altogether the operation was most clumsily performed, and I have no doubt that I must have cut a most ridiculous figure while it was going on. I tried to look grave, but was constrained to laugh: then I received a lecture upon the importance of gravity in a minister. I suppose he subjected me to this ridiculous process to see what kind of stuff I was made of. But the candle snuffed with the tongs shed no lustre on his character, and revealed none of the peculiarities of mine. Such antics are more suitable to a harlequin than to a holy man of God.

LETTER XIX.

JOCULAR PREACHING—SPECIMENS OF IT.

To Mr. Midway, of Fullerton.

YOUR town, lying neither in the torrid nor in the frigid zone, is much to be desired. It is well lighted, well watered, and well peopled with inhabitants. Like those of other places, they have to pass through difficult straits in making the voyage of life; but, like the ancient pilot, they know how to keep clear of the rock on the one hand, and of the whirlpool on the other. The preachers of your town are not gloomy, but generally grave, making use of that sound speech which cannot be condemned. Happy Fullerton! "Happy is the people that is in such a case: yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord."

As you seldom wander on any day, and never on the Sabbath day, it is probable that you never heard a jocular sermon in your life. I have heard many such sermons; and I wish now to make you acquainted with some of them, in order that you may see in what manner I make out the case that I have undertaken to establish, namely, that Hyper-Calvinism engenders a spirit of levity, and sometimes even of downright buffoonery in the service of God. In my letters to Messrs. Hyper and Savory, I have pointed out the apostles and the accompaniments of this im-

propriety; and now I am to favour you with some examples of it. With a few of them you will be rather startled, and rather disposed to question their authenticity. But really you have no need of any misgiving on the subject; because what I tell you I heard myself, and wrote it down at the moment of its original utterance.

As you are naturally very grave, it is just possible that in some of the following specimens, you may see nothing to laugh at. So much the better for you; but that does not prove that there is nothing laughable in them. You may have no keen sense, or no sense at all, of the ridiculous: then the finest stroke of wit upon you would be entirely lost. To appreciate a good joke, it is necessary to know the varied meaning of words; otherwise you will never discern the genius which often sparkles in the witty, the clever, or in the unexpected application of them. Besides, the *words* of a jest are only a part of it, and sometimes only a very inconsiderable part of it. The point, the beauty, or the profanity of the jest is often so untransferable that no language can adequately set it forth. There may be something irresistibly comic in the manner of its original utterance which is entirely lost as soon as the scene, of which it formed a part, has vanished away.

In giving you some modern specimens of jocular preaching, I wish to avoid all offensive personalities, and to expose the folly of certain pulpit performances, without publishing the names of the performers. But I feel obliged in some way or other to make an appropriation of the jokes, to the parties to whom they belong; for this purpose I have assigned to the preachers, whose sermons I record, the following names:—Magnus, Mikros, Ignotus, Neaniskos, Paulus, and Philologus. Without intending it, I found

that in this list I have alternately adopted a Latin and a Greek designation. You will not object to this, but you do object to the practice of making a man an offender for a word. So do I; and nothing would have induced me to publish these specimens, were I not persuaded that they are the natural results of a spurious theological system, which is too popular in the present day.

With these observations premised, I now introduce you to

MR. MAGNUS.

Scarcely any one can hear this preacher without exclaiming, "How ill grey hairs become a jester!" But at the same time no one can hear him without admitting, that there is no man of equal age, who exhibits more untiring energy in the pulpit; because he speaks from the deep rooted convictions of his mind. I have often admired him for the same reason that I used to admire Col. Sibthorp, not for what he said, but for his honesty, and for the uniform consistency of his character. The blows that Magnus deals out against all false doctrine, heresy, and schism, remind you of the strength of a giant, but at the same time they remind you of the solemn admonition "that if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The following may be considered as some of the gems of this popular preacher.

[Text, Ephesians, i. 7. K. S. 19,'52.]

The Apostle told the Ephesians what he had himself experienced. He was not like your ministers who keep saying, "Do, do, do." While they are such advocates for doing, they don't do themselves; they ought to be horsewhipped.

There are many who say that I am afraid that too many will go to heaven, and that I don't like work. What! I?—why, I

do more than they all; I work like a horse. They deserve to be hanged—a set of rascals as they are!

God was passing by, and said, "Who built that gibbet, I see yonder?" "Haman." "Then, as a man builds his house to live in it, so let Haman be hanged on his own gibbet."

[Text, Heb. ii. 1. H. S. 10.'59.]

The devil set a trap to catch Adam; but God set another trap, and caught the devil himself.

They are now driving four-in-hand to keep the gospel from the poor. They must have a man polished up; he must be graceful, classical, grammatical, and I know not what besides; but you might as well have a doll or a clodhopper to teach you as a man-made parson.

[Text, Rom. xi. 36. U. Y. 11.'59.]

I don't know why I should be here this afternoon. I am rather bigger than some of the brethren; but it is not the size of the man, but the blessing he brings, which gives him importance; and the greatest of all blessings was one sent, not by a man, but by a woman.

What a number of fine things they say now-a-days of departed saints; you would think they were angels. When I was a boy I made clay marbles, because I could not afford to buy real ones; but they were soon broken; and man-made saints are broken like the clay. If I were to make a saint by pulpit-begging, it would be but a beggar of a saint.

I heard a duty-faith man preach from "Whosoever will." I watched him narrowly, and I soon found that he was obliged to come to our point after all. We are not such fools but we know the English alphabet.

Some assert that we say, "Let us sin that grace may abound." The devil must be in them for saying that we say so; and the devil would be in us if we did say so.

The parson at Chobham says that there would have been more peace in the church if the ninth of the Romans had never been written. No doubt there would have been in what he calls the church.

The other day I was reading a sermon of old John Wesley on justification; he finds that we must have a righteousness; but what do you think? He makes our faith to be that righteousness, and insists on a righteousness imparted, instead of a righteousness imputed. Ah! Johnny; there is your great blunder. You like sanctity, do you? The Devil can be very holy, he can put on a

long face, and get it white-washed with Spanish chalk! Ah! my boy, you have taken up the doctrines, but the doctrines have not taken up you, and that makes all the difference!

Some time ago, I found something the matter with me; I did not know what the complaint was, it made me uneasy, and even wretched. It was like quicksilver, no sooner did I put my hand upon it, than it was off to another part; I could not catch it; it was ever going about, hither and thither. At last I found it out, and it was this: "I find another law in my members," and the discovery made me very comfortable; yea, I was as pleased as a child with a toy.

Although Magnus thinks himself better than he was, I am sure that he is still far from well. Instead of being his own doctor, let him consult that eminent physician, Dr. Gurnall, who thus describes the complaint with which he is afflicted:—

"When levity is indulged in, the mind becomes as inconstant as quicksilver, which goes hither and thither, but stays nowhere. It is with us, as with one who has had his skull broken, who, when recovered, finds his brain so weakened, that when he goes about any serious business, cannot persist in it for any length of time, is off and on, out and in. If a ship be light for want of ballast, how hard it is to keep it from toppling over."—*Gurnall.*

Magnus thus continues:—

I am not afraid of being called an Antinomian. I say that no man will be saved for his goodness, and that no man will be lost for his badness. Some say, Only believe! only believe (sarcastically); 'tis all stuff. If any one here does not wish God to have all the glory, what is he to do? I will tell you:—First let him give half a crown to the collection, and then let him walk out (great laughter).

I heard a duty-faith man say, that the testimony of Christ was the holy life of a believer! Fudge! I don't suppose that man is here. Such men don't come to a place like this. One of them told me that Christ died for all. 'Then,' I said, 'why are so many lost? What a beautiful plant you are! You are a tulip, you shall be put in a balsam pot! O! you proud limb of the devil. Did not Christ know whose debts he came to pay, whose souls he came to save?'

The children sometimes say, 'If it had not been for that old rogue of a lawyer, we should have had a great deal more than

what we have.' So you see the lawyers sometimes catch it. But Christ gives us everything; for he came not to do the will of brother Magnus, or of brother Grumus, but the will of him who sent him.

Now for the collection! Our brother here has a bilious complaint, and I want you to cure it. Some years ago, I saw this questionp roposed in a newspaper. What is the worst bilious complaint a man can have? Answer: when a man has bills coming due which he cannot meet. I want you to give him a good bolus that he may get rid of this complaint.

All this trash, and much more of the same kind, was introduced into a sermon of singular energy, and, in some respects, of great scriptural propriety. But in all the discourses of these men there is a strange mixture of the sacred and the profane; of the solemn and the burlesque; amusing enough to the Antinomian, but disgusting enough to a man of God. The minister of the chapel, in writing about this sermon, says, "that to him it was savory and comforting."* whether he referred to the bolus he was to swallow I know not; but how he could say so without some qualifying remark, I am at a loss to understand. No man knows better than he that a great part of the sermon was nothing but twaddle, or something worse. Many ministers of a certain class were present on the occasion. It seemed like a convocation of the clergy with *their Antistes*, laying himself out for their edification and amusement. Both among the clergy and among the laity, there was plenty of grinning; for after the fashion of the high school, there was great fun mixed up with much talk about election and everlasting love. How, at the close of such a sermon, they could sing, "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds," I cannot imagine: it must have been a mere compliment to Him who is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints,

* "Earthern Vessel," 12.'59.

and to be had in reverence of all them about Him. Indeed, the whole service appeared to me nothing better than a sham or a religious masquerade.

[Text—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ."]

You call this an express command. But this is an instruction. There is nothing of command, exhortation, or invitation in it. If a servant boy of yours were to ask you which way he were to kill himself the quickest, and you were to reply, "Blow your brains out with a pistol;" and the boy were to act accordingly, would you like it said that you gave him an express command to do it? If a minister, who has only had the Holy Ghost to teach him, were to call our text a command, it would be bad: still it might be accounted for: but for you,* who have been to a minister-modelling school, to embellish and to finish up, and to add the super-advantages of such a God-helping establishment,—for you to call this text an express command, is altogether unaccountable, unbearable, abominable.

Now, the crime of a murderer, or of a thief, is unbearable, is abominable; but to apply these terms to a brother minister's opinion on a certain text is an outrage on charity, and likewise on common sense. Indeed, Magnus almost says, "the man who believes my text to be an express command, deserves to be hanged, shot, or drowned;" for he says, that it is an error past endurance. I suppose the boy and the pistol is intended as a fine piece of reasoning on the subject; but I can only regard it as a stupid joke.

This sermon is commended by him of the Tabernacle; he says—

"That it is a wholesome handful of meal to counteract the deadly poison which passes for gospel in the present day."

It is not quite correct to speak of a deadly poison being counteracted by a handful of meal. Yet it is paraded before the public as something unusually

* Editor of "Primitive Church Magazine."

witty and appropriate to the subject. The "Earthen Vessel" says also that—

"The publication in which this sermon occurs will be handed down as a choice treasure to thousands when its author is lying in the dust!!!"

[Text—Isa. lxii. 8, 9. P. 8. 60.]

The devil boxed Job on both ears. First he was not a child of God because he was not rich; then he was not a child of God because he was not poor; so that you see the devil is never pleased, Well, never mind; let him be displeased.

God said to the devil, "You think you can kill Job. Well, go and try; and then come and tell me how you have succeeded."

If certain fine professors meet a poor brother, they pass by on the other side: and avoid him as they would the tax-gatherer.

Arminians tell you to seek the Lord; but who told them to do so! When they told me to do so, I knew no more what to do than a cow. I did not know what I was to seek, except it was to get more money, when I had spent all at the public house. I do not suppose God would enable me to seek more to get drunk with!

We often hear at our brotherly meetings, or rather at our flummery meetings, language like this: "We have done but poorly last year, but we will try to do better next year." Ah! I hate such nonsense.

LETTER XX.

MIKROS.

Permit me now to introduce to your notice the great Mr. Mikros. Knowing as you do the meaning of this word, you will say that it is a contradiction in terms to apply to it the word great; but it is not a contradiction in reality, for many who call themselves little, and even less than the least, are often more inflated, and more filled with notions of self-importance, than all other men. The popularity of

Mikros is scarcely inferior to that of any other preacher of the metropolis; for years he has been known as one of the highest of the high, and as one of the merriest of all the merry parsons of the present day—a kind of coryphæus to rule the choir and to lead the song. It is necessary to remark that with him I have no personal acquaintance. I believe him to be an amiable man, but I have nothing to say about his character, but only about his mistaken views of the gospel, and about his jocular mode of preaching it. Recently he has struck a blow which nearly cracked the "Earthen Vessel,"* and astounded no inconsiderable portion of the Israel of God.

In other words, he has drawn such a frightful picture of the ever blessed God, that the friends of the painter regard it with horror. Some even say that if it is not a caricature, there must be two devils in the universe, instead of one; or that the character of God is as bad as that of any heathen deity, and far worse than that of the most cruel wretch that ever lived. But I am charitable enough to say that I don't believe Mikros; I don't mean that he is guilty of falsehood, but I mean that his humanity is better than his divinity, and that he can, at least occasionally, rise above the horrible pit and the miry clay into which the Antinomian delusion has thrown him. A spurious theology requires him to say many cruel things of God, and many funny things to the people of God; but let us hope that these are only delusions, and that the time will come when he will renounce the error of his ways. That this is a consummation devoutly to be wished, will appear from the following portraiture of the Supreme Being, drawn by his own hand, and depo-

* See Nos. 11, 12, '59, and 1, 2, '60.

sited in the "Earthen Vessel," for the benefit of *Theophilus*, and of the church of God:—

"God hated some eternally, who are as inevitably the vessels of wrath as others are the vessels of mercy. The hated have no more chance of salvation than fallen angels have: not one of the hated will ever be a partaker of grace, and not one shall ever enter into the kingdom of God. If you are the objects of God's hatred, you never can become the objects of his love; if he has hated you he has hated you from all eternity: you must be damned to all eternity: there is no remedy. We are not lost by any practical sin we commit; we were lost before that. The people that shall be lost He hates an with infinite and eternal hatred. I will not mince the matter, God has constituted part of the human race, *independent of their sin*, objects of His infinite and eternal hatred," *

On this Mr. Wyard says:—

"If God hates without a fault, it must be that He hates men without any cause for His hatred. If, therefore, the finally lost are in perdition, as the effect of God's hatred, every finger in hell might be pointed to the great Eternal with unutterable scorn and contempt, while every voice would be raised to thunder forth the God-dishonouring fact, 'He hated us without fault.'"†

You will, I think, admit that a man who can say what Mikros says, is quite high enough, or Antinomian enough, to satisfy all the demands of the Hyper school, and to frighten all other schools out of their propriety. Now, I ask, may we not exclaim concerning the man who entertains such views; "Wonder, O! heavens, and be astonished, O earth?" We may do so; but there is yet another thing which is still more surprising, and that is, that the propounder of these views is one of the most facetious preachers of the day; thus affording another illustration of the fact that I am endeavouring to bring out to public view.

Read the sermon, "Jacob and Esau," and the explanations and ramifications of it, in the "Earthen

* See "Earthen Vessel," 11, 12, '59. † "Earthen Vessel," 1, '60.

Vessel," and you will have proof enough of his Hyper-divinity; but hear him preach, and you will have proof enough of his pulpit jocularity. Poor erring mortals are often giddy with the elevation to which they are raised. Mikros himself is not altogether free from this infirmity, for he can make use of that kind of self laudation which seems to say, "stand by thyself, for I am more popular than thou." At any rate, it was not much like a little one, for him to say of brother Wyard, "that his place of worship wears but a cold appearance, and that if he were to preach the truth more gloriously, (more jocularly?) his place would be filled with rejoicing hearers." To this, brother Wyard justly replies:—

"It is not truth simply that attracts; there are other things that attract, and induce persons to go to one place of worship rather than another; and all of us have not these kind of articles at command; all of us are not facetious, witty, humourous; all of us cannot be funny and create roars of laughter; all of us have not the daring to pass puns and jokes on the most solemn occasions, and make people grin when perhaps they ought to weep"*

I know that Mr. Hopeful has put something into the "Earthen Vessel" on the subject, There he questions the propriety of Mr. Wyard's remarks, and even intimates that Mikros has always been as free from jocularity in his preaching, as ever the apostle Paul was. But, in this respect, Hopeful is not truthful; but I will not so much charge him with a want of veracity, as with a want of power to see through the story of a cock and bull. It is a sad thing to be destitute of this power, but let him be consoled by the reflection that it is far worse to be a knave, than to be a fool. Another *friend* to Mikros, has deposited something in the "Vessel," of a more truthful character. He says:—

* "Earthen Vessel," 1, '60.

"I wish he would take to heart what Mr. Wyard has told him about his uttering puns and jokes, and witty sarcasms, in such a sacred place as the pulpit. By omitting such things, he would starve the swine, but the sheep would be better fed."

I feel persuaded that the omission of these things would be fatal to his popularity; for jokes and gibes are always acceptable to the multitude. I should be sorry to affirm that the fold of which Mikros is the shepherd is filled with nothing but swine; but there are very few in that fold who do not enjoy these things; and being mixed up with singing and prayer, they think that their enjoyment of these things is the same thing as their enjoyment of the gospel. I now proceed to favour you with some gems of the sermons of Mikros; they are *morçeaux* for which I am indebted to my own observation. But there is one exception, for which I am indebted to Mr. Rothery, who was present on the occasion referred to:—

A chapel is re-opened for a Hyper minister, which had been previously occupied by what is called a moderate Calvinist. The minister enters the pulpit, and immediately exclaims, "What a s—— (at the same time sniffing in a manner correspondent with the word made use of.) I think there must have been some polecat of an Arminian in this pulpit!"

Now, with all my love for the liberty of prophesying, I think that I should have gone out of the chapel when the polecat came in. But I have no doubt that Mr. Hyper liked it exceedingly, and that even Mr. Savory thought he smelt something good in it; and that most of the congregation were delighted to find that a pole cat could be spiritualized, and rendered subservient to the comfort of the dear people of God. This is not a solitary case of the kind, nor is it one of the most brilliant of those gems which adorn the ministry of Mr. Mikros.

I know you will say that the following cases contain as many gems of high doctrine as of pulpit jocularity. I know they do; but then you must remember that my object is to show that one is correlative to the other; that—

> "The head is not more native to the heart,
> The hand more instrumental to the mouth,"

than is ungenerous ridicule to Hyper-Calvinistic views.

[Text—2 King ii. 12. S, T. 8.'59.]

A dog's neck, and swine's flesh! what unsavoury meat! more fit for duty-faith men, than for free-grace people.

Some are drinking in popery, some Church of Englandism, some free-will*ism;* all are drinking in some iniquity or other, instead of coming to the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!

Distribute a few tracts (sarcastically), visit the poor, be a Sunday-school teacher, and be as good as you can. This is the teaching most prevalent now.

[Text—Rom. ix. 22. S. T. 11.'59.]

I have read a good many works of duty-faith men, and I have found that the farther they are off from the truth, the more they feel at home; if, by chance, they stammer out, or stumble upon a doctrinal subject, their zeal dwindles down to a spark. The reason is, that they have no love for the truth, and their piety is only a buttered piety, which easily melts away.

Some are good men in spite of their faults; and others are bad men in spite of their excellencies.

Now, if any of you are offended, you may give up your sittings, and your money shall be returned: others will soon take your places. I assert that more than one-third of the parsons are preaching for a bit of bread; and as for Swedenborgian and other deacons, I believe the devil is in them.—Amen.

[Text. Rom. xi. 23. S. T. 12'59.]

Jesus reads the book of life every Sabbath day. If he sees your name there, he will have you converted: but not on the ground of your faith and repentance, but because he reads your name there.

What a number of leaky parsons there are in our day: they are losing their congregations because they are running dry.

[Text—John i. 29 N.N.R., 11'.59.]

The Lamb of God is spotless, therefore all God's people are spotless too. There is a great deal of strange twaddle on this subject. I know a yea and nay minister—not a Puseyite, but rather a good man—that is, in a chandler-shop style: he said to me, "when David is seen in heaven, will he not be recognized as having once committed sin?" I replied, "When they see you there, will they not recognize you as being a very stupid fellow for having entertained such an opinion?"

The number of the beast is 666. I don't agree with any of the learned explanations of this number, I say that it means the people of the beast. What! say you only 666? Ah! but you may add millions, billions, trillions, or any number you like.

Surely this could only be intended as a joke. I am not, however, disposed to deny that this interpretation is quite as good as that of another popular divine. Both Dr. Mikros and Dr. Mirus seem to run riot upon the word of God; and both, consequently, are much admired as having attained to an elevation far superior to that of the inferior clergy.

"Get about fifteen duty-faith men from America; and let them bring over something in a bottle, and let it be administered to some silly old women and let them squall out something about religion, and we should have a revival similar to that which is now going on in Ireland!"

After the sermon there was a public meeting in the chapel; and Mr. Mikros, who had preached in the afternoon, continued his observations in the following style:

"The Hypers should, above all others, have Sunday Schools, because they only can teach the truth. But, you may say that I have no right to speak thus, because I have no Sunday School of my own; but I shall have one soon, and one that will correspond in magnificence with that establishment of which it will form a part, and then I shall crow

> "'Cock-a-doodle-do (imitating the crowing of a cock),
> I have a school as well as you.'"

Now, Mr. Midway, I do not dispute the right of a minister to roar like a lion, to bray like an ass, or

to crow like a cock, if he should think it edifying to do so. Every man in his own order, and every thing in its proper season; but this imitation did appear a little out of season, for it took place immediately after singing and prayer. Cock-crowing will hardly comport with joining our cheerful songs with angels round the throne, or with praying to God for the assistance of his Holy Spirit; and we should hardly have expected "cock-a-doodle-do" from the lips of one who had just been speaking so confidently, and even so frightfully, of God's everlasting hatred of the children of men.

On this subject I differ *in toto* from Mikros; but let me be candid towards him. Honour to whom honour is due: and I am ready, not only to admit, but even to maintain, that his cock-crowing on this occasion was not unsuccessfully performed. There was a shrillness in it, and a naturalness in it, that caused it to be received with a burst of uproarious applause, in which I believe Mr. Bloomfield and Mr. Woolacott, who were present, most heartily joined. As, however, cock-crowing is not a scriptural qualification for a minister, and not a necessary exercise for the comfort of the dear people of God, I should not have adverted to it on the present occasion, were it not to shew that high doctrine and high fun generally go together.

[S. T. 11 '59.]

Where did the Puritans get their duty-faith—I was going to say, their dirty faith—from? Why from Popery; it stinks of the devil.

[G. C. C. 1 '60.]

I am a very plain man. A lady said she did not want to hear me, for she had heard that I was some great one, and great men she never could understand; but she soon found out her mistake about my greatness, for after the service she said, that she had never heard such an A, B, C, preacher in all her life.

LETTER XXI.

IGNOTUS.

HERE is another favourite of the high school; I never heard him preach, and therefore I can furnish you with none of his gems. But I am credibly informed that in coarse jocularity he even outstrips Magnus and Mikros, while in doctrinal views he is perfectly accordant with both. So much is he like "Punch in the pulpit," that it is no uncommon thing in his neighbourhood to hear people say, "We will go and hear old Ignotus to night; we shall have such rare fun."* Half of the time is spent in laughter, in which the preacher *audibly* joins, and when the service is over, persons may be heard saying, that it was as good as a play. Old stagers can look very grave while uttering their witticisms, but Ignotus cannot refrain from loud laughter while giving utterance to his. This is perhaps rather a sign of weakness than of wickedness, and is certainly no proof that he is more irreverent than those cunning men who can create mirth in the congregation, without seeming to be affected by it themselves.

I have no wish, however, to pronounce authoritatively on the claims of these men to morality or religion; but I remind you most emphatically, that Ignotus is a Hyper-Calvinist of the first water, and, *therefore*, his ungenerous ridicule is most abundant, and his jocularity is as gross as that of any minister you ever heard. You know that the "Earthen Vessel" is the organ of the laughter-loving school of divines; but even that publication now and then gives a gentle hint to its patrons on the subject. It speaks with commendation of brother Garrard†

* E. V., p. 65, '60. † P 224, '60.

because he is a wonderful deal more sedate in his manner than he used to be. Indeed, it has been observed that Hyper ministers become more moderate as they advance in years, or else they become downright religious blackguards.

Now we might as well say, that a playhouse is like a little heaven below, as a chapel where a jester is in the pulpit, and where the lovers of amusement are in the pews. You know Ignotus better than I do; then tell him to laugh, and to laugh loudly, if he pleases, but tell him not to do so in the pulpit: tell him not to laugh at all other Christians as though they were all fools: tell him not to treat the Bible as a jest book, and religion as a farce: tell him that it is a wicked thing to convert the place of public worship into a place of public amusement. But, while I am telling you to do all this, I suspect that he is incorrigible—that he is too far gone into the mad career of jocularity to be brought back into a sober state of mind. Then his praying would be more devout, and his preaching would be more grave; but in that case his popularity would be greatly diminished. "Ah! there's the rub;" were it not for this, Punch would soon vacate the pulpit, and confine himself to more appropriate spheres. Yet I do not despair even of *Ignotus*. When you go to see him, call up brother Gurnall to accompany you; for "he being dead, yet speaketh," and speaketh most appropriately and most faithfully against this merry Andrew. He says:—

"The vain glorious preacher, who, instead of making known the mystery of the Gospel, makes it his errand in the pulpit to make himself known—who blows up his sermon (as butchers do the flesh they sell) with a windy pomp of words, and frames his discourse rather to tickle their ears than to profit their souls; to send them home applauding the preacher for his wit and parts, rather than admiring the excellencies of Christ, and the riches of

His grace. Thus, alas! many who should be factors for Christ, play the merchant for their own credit. They speak one word for their master, and two for themselves. These ministers may be as fair as Rachel, while their ministry is barren like Rachel."

LETTER XXII.

NEANISKOS.

I AM really sorry that this very eloquent, racy, and vigorous preacher, should be placed in the same category with Magnus, Mikros, and Ignotus. In his preaching, there is not all the scurrility of the first, nor all the absurdity of the second, nor all the impudence of the third. But, it is too much characterised by levity and fun; indeed it has produced as much grinning, and as much loud laughing, as that of any jovial divine to whom I have referred. I do not say that all his discourses are disfigured by levity, and ridiculous story-telling. No! some of them are serious and solemn throughout. This shews, that joking is not a necessary condition of his nature, that he can avoid it if he please; and why does he not always avoid it? Why should he ever pander to the morbid appetite for amusement in a place of worship, as though there were a comic way to glory, and a laughable mode of obtaining salvation? In the theatre, some pieces require the actor to be very comical, and some require him to be very tragical; but in the house of God the preacher should always be grave, and always free from those tricks and antics which distinguish an actor upon the stage.

Boldness in preaching is good, but impudence in preaching is bad: yet it is common to mistake the

latter for the former. At any rate, I very much question whether the boldness of *Neaniskos* is the same kind of thing as the boldness of Peter and John, which shewed that they had been with Jesus. A man who is addicted to foolish talking, and jesting which is not convenient, can have but little or no fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Bishop Hall says, that "it is commonly seen that boldness puts forth before their time and before their ability. Wherein we have seen that many, like lapwings and partridges, have run away with some part of the shell upon their heads."

It cannot be concealed, and ought not to be denied, that there is in the preaching of *Neaniskos*, much that is worthy of all admiration. I don't know, however, that this is saying very much in his favour; for that man must have a singularly defective vision, who can see nothing but excellencies, or nothing but defects, in any one who constantly discourses upon the Word of God. "Now Barabbas was a robber;" and *Neaniskos* is a joker, and jocularity spoils all. "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour; so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour."

I once heard him exclaim, "I say that it is more difficult for God to drive self-righteousness out of a man, than it is for him to create a world." Some thought this very fine, while others thought it very ridiculous. In the same sermon also, he said: "There is something good in Antinomianism; but as to Arminianism, it is one of the devil's strongholds, which must be pulled down." Such an utterance manifests no charity towards the Methodists, and no modesty on the part of the preacher; but it does manifest the union between jocularity and high doctrine; for everybody knows that *Neaniskos* likes

fun in the pulpit; and everybody knows that he likes Dr. Crisp and Dr. Hawker, and other distinguished names in the Hyper-school of divines.

That his preaching has an Antinomian tendency, there cannot be the slightest doubt. He says the heart is as bad as the devil when we are converted, and that it will be as bad as the devil till we die.* This, of course, is quite consistent with the creed of Mr. Antinomian, but quite contrary to the creed which dictates these words: "Create within me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me;" and, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Again, "As your righteousness cannot make Christ's righteousness better, so your sin cannot make it worse."† These are savoury morsels for those who, according to Mr. Harington Evans, rest in the doctrines of grace without watchfulness of their walk before God.‡

But, in pursuance of my object, I now give you some specimens of his jocularity, which may be considered as some of the gems with which his preaching is adorned. Speaking of semi-Calvinists, he says: "We have all kinds of divinity conglomerated into one. Little bits of Pelagianism, tacked on to small scraps of Arminianism; these tacked on to Calvinism, and that again joined to Socinianism." Now, all this balderdash may be considered as very witty or very profound, but it certainly argues more of the impudent things of man than of the deep things of God, especially as it is intended to ridicule the views of those ministers whose pulpits *Neaniskos* is sometimes called to occupy.

The practice of story-telling, whether in the pulpit or out of it, is seldom comformable to the law of

* Baptist Messenger. † Letter X.
‡ Baptist Messenger.

truth. Those who deal in it often draw very largely upon their imaginations. The same story, told by different individuals, often becomes a very different thing; not only are facts distorted, but even incidents are supplied to render the story more piquant, and more suited to gratify the universal passion for the marvellous. My opinion is, that if one half of our religious anecdotes were thoroughly sifted, or examined into, they would be found greatly at variance with reality and with truth. I don't mean that our public speakers are public liars. No! but I do mean, that through the infirmities of our common nature, the best of men can scarcely maintain an upright position while walking in the slippery paths of story telling, especially if they are doing so to make out a plausible case, or to please a laughter-loving multitude.

The following I read in the *Freeman*. As it seriously compromised the veracity of some one, I wrote to the "Paper" about it; but I got no reply, and no acknowledgment of my communication:—

"I will," said *Neaniskos*, "in defence of my plain way of speaking, relate to you what *was told me by a young man*. He said that he was one of a ship's crew, which was an ungodly set. Playing one night at a game of cards, a fine spoken officer called out to them, 'Extinguish that nocturnal luminary!' They continued playing, regardless of the officer's command. The fact is, that they did not understand it; but another officer cried out, 'Douse the glim!' and immediately the light was put out."

"Now," said *Neaniskos*, "I mean to say, 'douse the glim.'" Very good; but it was very bad for the young man to speak of that as happening to himself which was current as a jest fifty years before he was born! This violation of truth was the more aggravated as it was accompanied with pious regrets about the depravity of the crew of which the friend

of *Neaniskos* formed a part. Oh, the mawkishness of stories told at our public meetings! But how characteristic of the present times. Don't say that these remarks are "much ado about nothing." They are much ado about something, and about something which lies at the very root of whatsoever things are beautiful in the kingdom of God.

The following story *I heard Neaniskos* relate from the pulpit at Wandsworth. I refer to it because I think it characteristic of the man, and of the mode in which he seeks to obtain popular applause. The story had little to do with the sermon, and was evidently lugged in for the sake of amusement:—

"Oliver Cromwell," said the preacher, "ordained, that as soldiers were billetted at a public-house, so ministers on duty should there have free quarters on the Sabbath day. Now, there was a young man, who, after having been entertained on the Sabbath, was asked for payment on the Monday morning. 'What!' says the young man, 'ask payment of me, who am a minister of the gospel?' 'No, no,' says mine host; 'you are no minister, you never summoned the house to family worship. You also went to bed without saying your prayers; and in the morning you rose in the same manner. You are no minister. Now, as you went to bed like a sinner, and got up like a sinner. so you shall pay like a sinner. Down with your money.'"

Now this was a capital joke, and the telling of it was well done; and the effect of it was a loud laugh. But it was all nothing but moonshine. There was no law of this kind in the time of Oliver Cromwell, or in the time of any other of our English kings. There was once some regulation like it in North Carolina, where it was not customary for tavern keepers to charge the cloth for their lodging and refreshment. I don't say that *Neaniskos* altogether made up this story. I believe him to be incapable of wilful misrepresentation; but I believe that his love of fun, and his anxiety to provide for the public

amusement, often makes him fall into the snare which is common to all pulpit and platform story-tellers.

I am sure that you will allow that in all pulpit utterances there should be a strict adherance to truth. Without this, the utterer, though speaking with the tongue of an angel and not of a man, is nothing better than a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. But admitting that there was no want of truth in this story, where was the propriety of introducing it into a religious service? Was it not like introducing a harlequin among the sons of God? The effect upon the audience was what might have been expected,—a burst of laughter. Some persons, indeed, immediately left the place. "Ah!" says Mr. Hyper, "they could not endure the truth as it is in Jesus," just as though such a moonshine story had anything to do with Jesus Christ. No, the more probable reason is, that they could not endure that so much levity should be mixed up with the service of God.

It is, however, the general opinion, that there is not so much levity in his preaching as formerly, and it is a striking fact, that there is not so much Antinomianism in it as formerly. You know what to infer from this coincidence. The following are a few extracts from a sermon preached in A. C. C. 31.8'60. This sermon, instead of being Antinomian, was most justly severe against *certain parts* of that system. It contained also a most indignant protest against the doctrine of *Mikros*, and almost in the very words of Mr. Wyard.* I should rather think that the awful ravings of Mikros had led *Neaniskos* to modify his Hyper-Calvinistic views. But even in a sermon from James i. 22, the preacher indulged in a little fun, and

* Letter XVI.

in the relation of some improbable stories. For instance:—

"Some say that my ministry succeeds on account of its vulgarity. Then how is it that theirs does not succeed?"

"Some are only hearers once in their life, that is when they go to be married."

"Certain doctors tried all the means in their power to procure sleep for an old woman, but without effect; at last a bright thought came into her mind on the subject; 'Take me,' said she, 'to the parish church, and I shall soon be asleep there.'" (Much laughter)

"They die sweetly who have the devil to rock the cradle."

"If you are lost, you will go to hell, and get a reserved seat."

These may be considered as some of his gems; but there are others still more beautiful, and certainly more characteristic of their author, such as:—

In your prayer meetings you say, "as the horse rusheth into battle." Now, I do wish that you would take that old horse and fasten him to some omnibus, that they may drive him to death.

"A deacon is like the devil, only with this difference:—that if you resist the devil he will flee from you, but if you resist a deacon he will fly at you."

No doubt many jokes and much pulpit drollery are wrongly attributed to him. A generous public will always give to such men more of this kind of stuff than what they deserve. But I believe a volume might be filled with what he has really uttered that is whimsical, grotesque, out of the way, and altogether unbecoming the solemnity of religion, and the dignity of a man of God.

LETTER XXIII.

PAULUS AND PHILOLOGUS.

THESE two ministers, unlike the four preceding, are not Baptists, but Independents. Though disagreeing with their brethren on the subject of baptism, they quite agree with them on the subject of the five points; and likewise in the jocular mode of preaching, or at least of defending them. These good men think it their duty to make game of their Arminian brethren; and they evidently do it much to their own satisfaction, and likewise much to the amusement, if not to the edification, of the congregation. Indeed, without some game of this kind, these ministers could scarcely get up any savoury meat, or provide any substantial meal for the dear people of God.

PAULUS

is of Jewish extraction, and, like his great namesake, preaches the faith that he once disbelieved, and even laboured to destroy. He is exceedingly racy, fluent, and colloquial; but on account of a very defective utterance, is sometimes quite unintelligible. In him I have noticed an impropriety which is rather common to the Hyper-school, namely, a great similarity between his preaching and his praying. In the latter exercise, there is quotation; there is reasoning; there is historical remark; there is expostulation; and if it were not for certain interjections, as

"O Lord!" "Gracious God!" &c., you would not know whether you were listening to a sermon or to a prayer.

The following are a few of the gems of a sermon delivered at Deptford, 29.8.60:—

[Text—Exodus xxxiii. 14.]

This text came to my mind last Friday or Saturday, but stop! let me see——. Yes, that will do.

They say, push on, or even take the kingdom of heaven by force! What impudence.

If you are shoved out of your place, you can't shove another into it; the place is for you, and you alone.

When you have no enjoyment of God, the devil comes and says, Do some dirty work if you can't do any clean.

Does God regenerate a man and make him His child, and then send him to hell? Yes, say the Arminians! I wonder God does not strike them dumb in the pulpit.

O, nothing distresses me more than to see a fellow get up into the pulpit, and preach a conditional gospel.

Some great man preached a sermon at St. John's Wood; all the front gallery was filled with grandees, and they said he preached such a wonderful sermon. "Pray," said I, "what was the text?" "Render unto Cæsar the things," &c. "Ah! I have no doubt that the sermon was fitted for a lady's drawing room."

Arminian darkness is worse than drunken darkness, or any kind of debauchery.

PHILOLOGUS

preached on the evening of the day on which Paulus preached in the morning. To me the evening preacher was more interesting than the morning one, because he is the successor of Latchford, whom I heard in my youth, and of whom I have written so much in Letters XV., XVI. It is said that the mantle of his predecessor has fallen upon him. It may be so; but it certainly looks more like the mantle of love than that which Latchford was accustomed to wear. However, the two preachers are not very

much unlike each other. In one part of his sermon he bawled out "Zaccheus, come down;" at the same time looking upwards as though he saw the little man perched in the tree. It was bawled out in such a high key as to startle the congregation, and to bring most vividly to my recollection the manner in which I once heard Latchford cry out, "Stop thief! stop thief!" For a moment I was alarmed; it seemed almost that old Latchford had risen from the dead. Even this was not all to bring to my remembrance the peculiarities of that remarkable man. I used to hear Latchford speak of Dr. Hawker in the most familiar terms; and in this very sermon *Philologus* remarked, "as my friend Dr. Hawker said."

In one respect, *Philologus* differs from his predecessors, and likewise from his contemporaries of the Hyper-school. He frequently appeals to the meaning of the "Greek word." Some say, "We don't want to know what the Greek saith, or what the Hebrew saith; but only what the Holy Ghost saith;" little reflecting that the teaching of the Holy Ghost is conveyed through the medium of this language. I believe that it is true that ministers who talk most about Greek in the pulpit know the least about it; but the criticisms of *Philologus* shew some considerable acquaintance with the meaning of the original words. But, if he rises above his brethren in this respect, he does not rise above them with regard to the vices of the school to which they belong. On this occasion his sermon was founded on Eph. i. 8, 9; and the following are some of the gems with which it was adorned:—

Some ignoramus says, "How do you know that God has an elect people?" I answer, "I know he has, because he has elected me!"

I think it would be a good thing to throw an Arminian over-

board; and then, if he should be cast up on the dry land, he certainly would say with Jonah, that "salvation is of the Lord."

A gentleman told me that the Calvinist gets on the bridge by one road and the Arminian by another; but that they will both get to heaven. "Will they?" says I, "My old friend, Dr. Hawker, speaks rather differently on the subject."

I read a sermon now and then. At first I get on pretty well; but soon I come to a dish of free will, and then I say, "Nonsense," and throw it down.

Some think to get to the top of Jacob's ladder at a bounce; but you cannot. You must go up step by step. Could you leap from that end of the chapel to this? I should think not.

Such, Mr. Midway, are some of the specimens of the Hyper-jocular mode of preaching the gospel. They are not, however, the most piquant that might be produced: some of them are not only distinguished for vulgarity, but even for obscenity; so reckless is Hyper-Calvinism of the claims of morality and of the fear of the Lord. At the same time, these are the things which render men extremely popular, and I am persuaded that if Magnus, or Mikros, or even Neaniskos, were to doff the fool's cap and the harlequin's coat, that they would become as popular as the late Mr. James, of Birmingham, or as any of those good ministers of Jesus Christ, who were too pious, too solemn, and too much in earnest, to merit the designation of "Punch in the pulpit."

LETTER XXIV.

JOCULAR PREACHING—REASONS FOR IT.

To Dr. Gammon, editor of the God-and Mammon Newspaper, and general apologist of pulpit drollery.

It is not surprising that the unseemly practice I complain of should find a defender; for only let a man be extremely popular, and all that he says will be lauded to the skies; his levity will be called "sanctified humour," and even his ridiculous or improbable stories will be received as articles of faith. It would really seem that you like a freak, and that you like to defend what is whimsical and out of the way. But I must not forget that you have as much right to contend for pulpit jocularity, as I have a right to contend against it. I will not therefore pronounce authoritatively on the subject; but in this, and the following letters, I will endeavour to shew the fallacy of those reasons you commonly urge in its favour. You say, properly enough, that the

COMIC ELEMENT

is a part of man's nature. But then, you say very improperly, that it may be made use of in giving interest, pungency, and even efficiency to a religious discourse. It may be safely admitted that it is as natural for a man to laugh as it is to cry; but then it cannot be safely admitted that whatever is natural to man may be appealed to in those exercises which

are designed to promote the edification of the soul. For instance, love between the sexes enters into the very nature of our common humanity. But what should we think of a man who should endeavour to awaken or to stimulate the tender passion in preaching? To many it would no doubt render him more popular, and his sermons more interesting; but he would not be justified in doing so on that account. The fact is, that men can be amative enough, and sportive enough, without any aid from the pulpit. No doubt there is a time to laugh and even a time to embrace; but these times are surely not to be found in the hours consecrated to the worship of God.

But, you ask, have not distinguished orators successfully appealed to the laughing as well as to the crying element of man's nature? They have. By the employment of ridicule and of well timed satire, they have driven men out of folly's dangerous ways into wisdom's happier paths. But no power of ridicule is the power of God unto salvation. The Christian minister is an orator unique of his kind; unlike others of his class, he must say, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal." In this warfare grinning has no place, and ridicule has no power. No! God is not a funny God; the good fight of faith is not a sham fight; and in the awful solemnities of death and of the judgment day, there is nothing to make us laugh?

Some of our most effective preachers have had no acquaintance with the arts of oratory, and of human persuasion, and even if they had, they would make no use of them in the work of the Lord; that is, they would use no enticing words of man's wisdom, no lightness and no jocularity, lest the faith of the hearer should stand in the wisdom of men and not in the power of God.

LETTER XXV.

ROWLAND HILL.

I BELIEVE that you regard this name as a strong tower of defence, and that if a minister is overtaken by a spirit of levity, he has nothing more to do than to run to this strong tower to save him from the imputation of doing wrong. You know that one at least of your jovial preachers often runs to it, when accused of a want of reverence in the service of God. So deeply rooted is the love of fun in our common nature, that even serious persons in his congregation will offer for him a kind of palliation, if not of justification, in something like the following terms: "Well, all this jocularity is not exactly to our taste; we should like a little more solemnity; but, then, you must remember the witty divine of Surrey Chapel, a man of undoubted piety, and of undaunted courage in the cause of God; so that a little pulpit drollery is not so bad after all, and not so much to be dreaded as some squeamish professors, or some miserable croakers, might be ready to imagine."

Now, all this is plausible enough; but, there is nothing in it solid enough to support your cause. Rowland Hill, though a good man, and even a great man, was not a faultless man. And most assuredly it was his fault that he did not sufficiently lay aside his easily besetting sin of pulpit drollery; and, I know, that you will not contend that the wrong doing of any great man is a proper excuse for the wrong doing of any little man, who may come after him. That Rowland Hill owed a great deal, not of his usefulness, but of his popularity, to his drollery, I am willing to admit; but I am not willing to admit that

a popularity springing from such a source, is an object worthy the ambition of any good man. You know that Dr. Johnson said of Dr. Watts, that he was a man in all things to be admired, excepting in his nonconformity. So it may be said of Rowland Hill, that he was a man in all things to be admired, excepting in his pulpit jocularity But, beside all this, between this witty divine, and your pulpit jester, there is little or no resemblance:—

1. For instance: his humour was so natural and spontaneous, that it necessarily, and undesignedly, mingled with all his modes of thought and forms of expression. But the joking of your friend is evidently premeditated, and designed to produce effect. I infer this from the circumstance that the same things are hawked about and repeated *ad nauseam*, and that they are not gracefully, or fittingly, but clumsily introduced into the subject of discourse. Rowland Hill was so constituted, that he could scarcely refrain from some stroke of humour, either in the pulpit or out of it. The following anecdote may be considered as characteristic of the man. Arriving at Hammersmith on the afternoon of the day that he was to preach in the evening, and not knowing where he was to take up his abode, he found himself in a fix; but his good sense and ready wit soon got him out of it. The manner in which this was effected will appear in the following dialogue:—

R. Hill. I say, Ostler, do you know where I can find a Methodist in this neighbourhood?

Ostler. O yes; there is old Mundy, who lives on the opposite side of the way.

R. Hill. Is old Mundy a Methodist then?

Ostler. Oh, yes; for he will say grace over a roasted apple any day.

R. Hill. Ah! that's the man for me, to him I'll go.

I had this anecdote from the son of that excellent man, who was so devout over a roasted apple, and between whom and Rowland Hill a long and intimate acquaintance was thus singularly begun. I like such a genuine stroke of humour; and I should think that the gravity of a man was nothing better than that of the owl or the ass, or that he was far gone into the regions of absurdity, who should think any the worse of Rowland Hill, for such a manifestation of native humour. And, in his case, some apology may be offered, for the introduction of it into the pulpit; always remembering, however, that what requires apology, must be of rather doubtful propriety. But when your friend is not only guilty of jesting, but of premeditated jesting, he is no more like Rowland Hill, than an artful and designing man is like a little innocent child.

2. In all probability this distinguished preacher was scarcely conscious of his own humour at the time when it was clearly perceptible to others. Now, this cannot be said of your friends, because they laugh, and sometimes laugh audibly, at their own folly. But he to whom you compare them would often express his regret at those manifestations of levity of which he himself was to a certain extent the innocent cause. The fact is, that he possessed, in no ordinary degree, that quality which is called *naiveté;* but for which we have no perfect synonym or correspondent term. The word ingenuousness is something like it, but not altogether equivalent. The following occurrence is an example of this quality:—After a collection sermon by Mr. Hill, parties retire to the vestry to reckon up the amount collected. It appears that Miss Claimant had an annuity from the chapel funds "Now," said Mr. Hill, "we have only to pray that this old

lady may speedily be taken to heaven, and the chapel will be free from all incumbrance." Others knew this, and wished for it as much as Mr. Hill; but they were not simple enough, or *naïf* enough to say so; and while they might have considered it as a capital joke, he may have only *ingenuously* declared his sentiments on the subject.

3. Here is another point of difference. Mr. Hill was not guilty of scurrilous jesting. At one time he was rather hard upon the Baptists; but generally speaking, he did not try to wound the feelings of good men. His shafts of ridicule were levelled at the hypocrite, the profligate, and the profane. But some of your preachers treat Arminians and moderate Calvinists in such a manner as though murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers, and perpetrators of crimes the most abominable, were not half so bad as those who were defective on the five points. Just like the venerable Bede, who, after having attributed to a man nearly every Christian virtue, makes a fatal drawback to his character by adding, "but, unhappy man, he did not keep Easter in our way!"

From these considerations, I think that your jovial preachers can receive but little countenance or support from the example of the late Rowland Hill. You are aware that the place of worship in which he laboured is called Surrey Chapel; but perhaps you are not aware that your most popular preacher calls it "that dunghole;" an expression which is not only characteristic of the man, but also of the spirit of that system of which he is the popular advocate.

LETTER XXVI.

DR. DRYASDUST.

I KNOW this preacher well enough, but I do not like him very much. Indeed I do not like him at all, because he is more like an automaton than a living man. There he stands, nobly erect, giving out sounds loud and clear, but without life, without unction, and without anything which can strike the conscience or affect the heart. The sermon is not wanting in information, or in logical propriety, but it is wanting in warmth, and in earnestness of soul. It is cold and clear as a frosty moonlight night.

Now you ask me should our young preachers resemble this grave divine? I answer, no! because I can scarcely believe a man in earnest who speaks of eternity, and of eternal things, in a cold and lifeless manner. I have been told that the celebrated Dr. Macknight was every whit as dry as Dr. Dryasdust himself. On his way to the church he was one day overtaken by a heavy shower; coming into the vestry, means were employed for getting rid of his superfluous moisture; but with very indifferent success. The time having arrived for the commencement of the service, the doctor exclaimed, somewhat impatiently, "I wish I were dry!" His colleague, Dr. Henry, pats him on the shoulder and says, "Never mind, you will soon be in the pulpit, and there you will be *dry* enough!"

What a fine stroke of humour, and how worthy the admiration of every sensible man. "Why," you

will say, "this is a commendation of joking!" Yes, but this was joking in the vestry, not in the pulpit. It is true that the vestry and the pulpit are hard by, but then again, this was not joking about a man's soul being saved or lost, but about a man's clothes being wet or dry! I confess, however, that this is a digression, but it lay in my way, and I could not help it. *Revenons à nos moutons.* I am persuaded that preaching without earnestness is like the altar without the sacrifice, or without the fire from heaven to consume it. A minister ought to have life as abundantly, and even more abundantly, than any other man. But now for an important question, what is the nature of that life so much to be desired in the pulpit?

1. Most assuredly it does not consist in the utterance of jokes and gibes, and of laughable tales. This is a sign of spiritual death, because it is irreverence before the majesty of God. Your preachers say more loudly and more frequently than others, that Christ is in the midst of His people. If they believe this, how dare they joke in His presence; and if they don't believe it, how dare they give utterance to a lie? The fact is, none can realize this divine presence without holy love and solemn awe; without being like unto him who said, "and when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead."

2. Life in the pulpit does not mean a brazen face and a stentorian voice. To be truly spiritual, you must be truly natural, or truly honest; and it is scarcely consistent with honesty to be equally loud with every sentiment that is uttered: the feelings naturally regulate the voice, and make it joyful or plaintive according to the nature of the sentiment seeking for utterance. Vociferation is not always the sign of power, but often the sign of the want of it. The great masters go about their work not in a

slothful manner; but still in a manner that is calm and dignified. It is true that if a minister cannot speak loud enough or distinctly enough to be heard, he had better not speak at all; for a mumbling utterance spoils a good sermon, and makes a bad one intolerable. But still, the thoughts that breathe, the words that burn, and the sounds which affect the heart, are generally unaccompanied with any oratorical display—with any roaring out of the word of God, and much less with any unfeeling or inconsiderate utterances about "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched."

3. Life in the pulpit is not the same with mere nervous excitement. The presence of a great multitude, the desire to please, and many other circumstances, not necessarily connected with religion, may give to a man the appearance of great activity and zeal. Let him have ingenious thoughts, eloquent action, and a musical voice, and every one would say that he is truly alive; while the fact is he may be truly dead. One of the most popular writers of the day was one of the most profane men of the day; yet, notwithstanding his profanity, he could write most beautiful descriptions of the operations of divine grace upon the heart! There is a knack in these things, and sometimes a hollowness in these things, which, if it were possible, would deceive the very elect. God only knows the heart: we should always judge charitably, but never pronounce authoritatively on the subject.

It must, however, be confessed that a very small stock of personal piety will serve to keep up a splendid appearance in the pulpit. Who was ever more eloquent, or more successful in gaining religious distinction and popular applause, than the late Mr. Victor? No Garibaldi, returning from a field of victorious battle, was ever more loudly

cheered, or more splendidly adorned, than was this popular divine. Yet, in the hour of temptation, he became weak as other men; and instead of going down to the grave with the honours which belong to a man of God, he went down to it enveloped in all that gloom and uncertainty which is ever consequent upon the perpetration of immorality or crime!

4. Let me now state what life in the pulpit really is. It is a holy animation of voice and of gesture, emanating from a high-toned piety and spirituality of mind. It is often said, "Ah! Mr. *Kohelet* is a very pious man, but he has not eloquence or intellect enough for the pulpit." This may sometimes be true; but it is more frequently true that he has eloquence enough and intellect enough, but not piety enough for the pulpit. Want of personal religion is not an unfrequent cause of ministerial failure;* and other things being equal, or not being very unequal, great piety, that is, great devotedness to God and to the Lamb, makes a great preacher. Hence the greatness of Whitfield, and the littleness of some who could soar far above him in point of intellect and of literary attainment.

LETTER XXVII.

PRAYER MEETINGS.

You told me that it was no slight recommendation of the ministry for which you are an advocate—that

* The Tabernacle people are wild and enthusiastic, and delight in anything out of the common course, which is a temper of mind, though in some respects necessary, should never be encouraged. Wildfire is better than no fire; but there is a divine warmth between the two extremes, which the real Christian catches, and which, when obtained, is evidenced by a cool head and a warm heart.—*Thornton to Berridge.*

it induces a multitude to attend the prayer meeting. Well, I am truly convinced that a spirit of prayer is a good sign of prosperity in the most exalted sense of the term. But that there may be something very unsatisfactory or hollow, even in a prayer meeting, will appear from the following dialogue on the subject, between Mr. *Gad* and Mr. *Staid.*

Staid. I am sorry, Mr. Gad, that you are so afflicted with that complaint called "itching ears."

Gad. What you call a complaint is no complaint at all; at least it is not so in my case. It is true that my poor soul, like my poor stomach, needs the excitement of variety.

S. According, then, to the most skilful doctors, you have at least one of the symptoms of "itching ears."

G. But doctors disagree. Mine may be an exceptional case; and I am so peculiar among a peculiar people, that I don't think I should be judged of by general rules.

S. Pray, how many sermons did you hear yesterday?

G. Four; and I have no doubt that by a little contrivance as to time and place, I shall be able to hear five, if not six, on the same day.

S. And do you think that you can have such a morbid appetite for hearing, and yet be in a sound state of health?

G. I know that you say that sermonhunting is as bad as foxhunting; but I find that this kind of chase is very invigorating, and that it does me good, as it doth the upright in heart.

S. Do you enjoy the devotional part of the service in those places you favour with your attendance?

G. No! I go in for the sermon, not for the

prayer. You know I am rather nimble, but it is as much as I can do to be in time for the text.

S. Then I am sure you must be uncircumcised both in heart and ears.

G. Not at all; for "by reason of use, I have my senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

S. If it were so, you would never forsake the prayer-meeting, as most of your family are known to do.

G. Well! as a general rule I do forsake them; but on last Monday evening I was present at the great prayer meeting; called so, because it consisted of more than a thousand persons.

S. But did the brethren pray with unusual solemnity and fervour, or did it appear that the Spirit was making intercession for them "with groanings which cannot be uttered?"

G. Nothing of the kind. They went on in the customary routes, and made use of the same old clumsy vehicles to convey their supplications up to heaven. They went "o'er the gloomy hills of darkness;" they went from Dan to Beersheba; they went to the ends of the earth. I really got fatigued with their wanderings because it was so long before they brought them to a close.

S. How then do you account for such an unusual gathering?

G. It is easily accounted for: think of the minister; he is the loadstone. Take him away, and according to his own phraseology, the prayer meeting would become a spare meeting; yea, prayer itself would lose its importance, and the throne of grace would lose its charms.

S. You don't mean to say that they prayed to the minister?

G. Not exactly so; but then they prayed about

him, and complimented him in such handsome terms, that you would think he was an angel, and not a man.

S. Pray what was the nature of his address on that occasion?

G. O we had such a treat! His discourse was founded on that delightful text, "Take it by the tail."

S. You know that this was a command to Aaron to take the serpent by the tail, and you had no serpent in the chapel whose tail might have been taken hold of.

G. Of course not; and though little or nothing was said of the literal, yet the spiritual or the mystical was long and loudly descanted on.

S. Ah! I see now what kind of treat you had, while discussing the serpent's tail. Pray was there any weeping on that occasion?

G. I think not, indeed; manifestations of sorrow would have been but a poor compliment to the minister, for he turned and twisted the tail about in such a variety of ways, and in a manner so grotesque, that the amusement was unusually great.

S. Amusement at a prayer meeting! why the thing is incredible. Can you name any one who was present on the occasion to which you refer?

G. Yes. Mr. Archer, Baptist Minister, of Spaldwick; though I am bound to say that I know nothing of the effect produced on his soul by the "tail."

S. Well, never mind how he felt under it; but if I understand you right, it is your opinion that our prayer meetings would soon become popular, if on these solemn ocasions our ministers would lecture facetiously upon a tail, or upon anything else of a similar character, and of equal importance.

G. Not a doubt of it. At this immense gathering the young men and maidens, the old men and children, seemed as pleased as Punch, and declared that such prayer meetings were never seen before

S. I can easily understand that; but then it was not the prayer, but the fun they enjoyed.

G. O, Mr. Staid, let us not judge uncharitably; but may I enquire how you can restrict your attendance to one place of worship?

S. I can do so very well; not because our minister is superior, or even equal, to some others; but he is a good man and able to teach others also; and no minister can say anything more important than what any man may read in the New Testament.

G. But you know that variety is pleasing.

S. It is so; but is it profitable? Now we have all as much right to gad about as you have, and supposing we were all to avail ourselves of this right, what a set of vagrants we should be; and what a scene would be presented in our streets: what jostling one another; what driving hither and thither in this wildgoose chase after popular sermons.

G. True. But then what a treat to hear men of genius, and to hear them place the truths of the gospel in such a variety of fantastic forms! And, then, I get it all so cheap, for by gadding about to all chapels and churches, I belong to none, and contribute to the support of none.

S. Ah! Mr. Gad, you are altogether wrong; you are miserably out of health. You have "itching ears," and your eyes have become so dim that you cannot see the great object which should call us to chapel or to church.

G. Will you define that object?

S. It is not merely to hear an interesting discourse. It is to learn the way of salvation; it is to engage in the worship of God; it is to set a holy example that others may find their way to Christ, and consequently their way to happiness and to everlasting life.

LETTER XXVIII.

RELIGIOUS NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES.

In defence of jocular preachers you say that they are highly applauded in these publications. They are so; but not in all of them; that they should be in any of them is a circumstance much to be deplored. And what shall we think of those editors, who being the avowed enemies of Antinomian doctrine, yet, for reasons best known to themselves, will extol the popular preachers of it, will make them quite equal to Whitfield, and almost equal to the first apostles of the Lamb? I will not say that these editors are prepared to praise everything that is merely successful, or that the money question is the polar star which directs them where to commend and where to blame; yet, disguise it as you may, there are many strange things in these publications, which induce the belief that the service of Mammon is not so inconsistent with the service of God, as the New Testament declares it to be. At any rate, if some of their columns support what is good, there are others which support what is bad; and what renders the case more aggravated, is, that the columns which uphold that which is evil, rest upon money for their support. At the same time, I do not condemn all religious periodicals; with some of them, I have no intimate acquaintance, and with others I have no acquaintance at all. But one of them I read constantly, and understand thoroughly; and if this is a fair specimen of all the rest, then their praise

is but a very indifferent support to the cause you support.

1. What do I read in this religious publication? Eulogies on ale, and stout, and Old Tom. With all your sanctified love of money, you must confess that such eulogies are somewhat out of place. As an editor, you do not wish to encourage drunkenness. Oh, no! you would write most powerfully, and speak most pathetically against it. Why, then, do you insert advertisements about the virtues and excellencies of intoxicating drinks? If you don't do it for the sake of money, what do you do it for? What necessity can you plead for doing it? Has it not, at least the appearance of evil, and of that evil which declares that gain is godliness? I do not say that you ought to be a teetotaller; but I do say that you ought to be a supporter of what is indisputably good, and a supporter of nothing that is indisputably bad. How supremely ridiculous is it to find in the same newspaper commendations of Guinness's extra stout, and commendations of Guinness's extraordinary preaching! Both these articles may be good in their way, but the juxtaposition of such advertisements can only consistently appear in a God-and-Mammon Newspaper.

2. What do I read in this religious publication? Numerous advertisements of quack medicines. All such medicines are not positively injurious, and all the proprietors of them are not to be set down as impostors; and if you, Dr. Gammon, could say, "I have taken these pills; I have rubbed in this ointment; I have found them most excellent remedies, and therefore I feel justified in turning an honest penny by advertising them in my paper:"—if you could say this, it is still possible that you might be mistaken—that your system might have been

cleansed without the pills, and your wounds might have been healed without the ointment; but still there would be no dishonesty in the transaction. But there is dishonesty—there is a sacrifice of religious principle in your giving a general and indiscriminate insertion to advertisements of this kind. Is it not true that in a great majority of cases quack medicines are gross impositions? Why, then, in the name of religion and of common honesty should you become an accessory to a cheat, and the abettor of shameful expedients for defrauding the public of their money? The public will be gulled; they will often pay more for a sham than for a reality. But again, I ask, why should a religious editor assist in gulling them?

You say that the proprietors of these medicines exhibit a most imposing list of testimonials to the value of their nostrums. They do; but if you knew how they obtained them, you would be ashamed to urge such a consideration in their behalf. Certain needy persons, and even needy noble lords, lend their names to the vendors of these nostrums for a valuable consideration! And even religion is brought in to sanctify the cheat. A pamphlet is circulated compassionating, in religious terms, the people's want of health, and concluding with a notice that the only medicine that can cure them is to be had of Mr. Fox, price two shillings and ninepence, government stamp included; and there is scarcely a *religious* newspaper, or a *religious* magazine, in which this notice is not inserted, as though it were well known that the children of light are more easily gulled than the children of darkness. Away with such quackery and such trickery perpetrated under the guise of humanity or of religion! Mr. Fox is no more worthy of admiration than

was the grocer's widow, who inscribed upon her husband's tombstone a most piteous lamentation about his decease, concluding with a notice that the grocery business would be carried on as usual!

If, Dr. Gammon, yours were merely a worldly paper, I could easily conceive how you would talk about this advertisement. You would probably say, "It is true that it is rather queer, and perhaps something worse than queer; we should be very sorry that our friends should be taken in by it; but then we have received three-and-sixpence for its insertion. Talk about religion, conscience, and the public health! Nonsense! One three-and-sixpence outweighs them all, and calls the astonishing magnificence of these unintelligible things—poor. We are told that the proprietors of the *Times* will not give insertion to advertisements of this kind. More fools they; for, constituted as society is, money is the one thing needful, and we have chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from us!"

3. What do I read in this religious publication? Advertisements of the prophecies of Zadkiel. You will probably say, what of that? Are they not as good as those of Dr. Whiston? Perhaps they are; there may be a difference of opinion on this point. But *you* know that Zadkiel's prophecies are nothing but moonshine, and you would say, "Don't be guided by them; there is no reason in them, and nothing in them that is profitable for the body or for the soul." But you would only say this in your religious capacity; but as the editor of the God-and-Mammon Newspaper, you would tell another tale; and you would give publicity to a parcel of lies. But the softer part of the community cannot imagine how the same man can serve two masters—telling lies for one and telling truth for the other. Old birds

are not caught with chaff: but young ones may be. Poor innocent creatures; they believe that religious editors would never give countenance to Zadkiel, unless there were some truth in him, or some prophetic inspiration in him, or something in him which could subserve the interests of this world, or of that which is to come.

4. What do I read in this religious publication? An advertisement of a book that is filled with obscenity, and with all manner of disgusting details about solitary vices, and human infirmities. For weeks and months, and I believe for years, has this impudent advertisement stared the reader in the face. You know, Dr. Gammon, that such advertisements pay well. Don't say you were not aware of the character of this book; you ought to have been aware of it. Don't say that you would lose your time and lose your profits, were you to be at all squeamish upon this subject. Better that you should lose your time, lose your profits, and lose your paper, than that you should pander to an idle and prurient curiosity, or in any way become instrumental in corrupting the public mind.

Now, the inference from all this is obvious enough. If you can insert advertisements of such queer and questionable morality, your praise of jocular preachers is not worth much. I will not say that you will do anything for money, but I do say that you will do a great deal for it. And, if for the sake of money, you will countenance Old Tom, quack medicines, fortune-tellers, and even obscene books, then why should you not cry up one set of preachers, and cry down another, merely for the sake of worldly gain?

Now, Dr. Gammon, I speak to you most solemnly on this subject. In lending yourself to any scheme for cheating the public, you deny the faith, and you

are worse than an infidel: yea, you sink down below the ordinary level of profligacy and crime. Most degraded is the female who, forsaking the guide of her youth, and forgetting the covenant of her God, abandons herself to that licentious course which throws a withering blast over the finest forms and fairest scenes of human life. But you are in the same condemnation—you are a mercenary who pushes truth and honesty on one side that you may get hold of some worldly advantage. You are guilty of literary prostitution, of sacrificing to Mammon, and of selling yourself to the devil. Such a course may be more respectable, but it is not less criminal, than that of the strange woman whose "house is in the way to hell, leading down to the chambers of death."

LETTER XXIX.

POPULARITY.

THERE is yet one more plea which you urge in favour of jocular preaching. You assert that it causes men to be extremely popular who make use of it. It does so; and I am ready, not only to admit, but even to maintain, that popularity is no crime, and that the ability to draw the attention of a great multitude to religion is a thing not to be despised. The voice of the people is not always the voice of God, yet it may be so sometimes; and many a preacher may look upon his popularity as the seal of heaven and signature of God Almighty, stamped upon the genuineness of his spiritual commission.

I admit all this; but your popular preacher is little better than a popular jester. It is true that

he exercises his talents on the subject of religion as Handel did his on the Messiah; as Raphael did his upon the Virgin and Child. The orator, the painter, and the musician may select religion as a stage on which to display their powers, while they have no love for religion itself. At any rate the minister who becomes popular by pandering to the morbid appetite for amusement, is no man of God, and no good minister of Jesus Christ. "The public," says Cowper, "is a great simpleton, and you must catch it as you would a pig—that is, by his ear." O, how mortifying must it be to our truly great men to find themselves outdone by our truly little men in this particular line. The fair preacher, like the fair trader, can never compete with the arts of charlatanism in getting hold of the public ear. To vulgar eyes, the pictures of Punch have more charms than the cartoons of Raphael; and to vulgar ears, Rory O'More has more sweetness than Haydn's Creation, or Handel's Messiah. But you quote the text, "And the common people heard him gladly." True; this is a high commendation for any preacher, but especially for a learned one; but it is no commendation, yea, it is a disgrace, if the common people hear him gladly on account of his jokes and jibes, or on account of anything inconsistent with the solemnity of religion and the worship of God.

I have heard of some people who like fish not so much for its own sake as for the sake of the fish sauce taken with it. So the public like a religious discourse, or any other discourse, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the humour infused into it. Who was ever more attentively listened to in the House of Commons than the late Col. Sibthorp? Not that the house cared a straw for what he uttered, but only for the humorous manner in which he

uttered it. Such was the homage paid to the comic element that his rising was usually the signal for general attention; the sleepers were awakened; the talkers became silent; the listless became attentive; and all expected a rich treat from his biting sarcasm, or humorous remarks. This, however, is no credit to that august assembly. Only think of its members looking out for fun while legislating for the good of the country, and for the interests of the world. There is only one thing which is more glaringly wrong, and that is, the case of your preachers, who can be very frolicsome in connection with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Would you be extremely popular? Be extremely funny, and you will succeed. For proof of this, remember that the two most popular preachers of the present day are the most facetious men of the present day. Be assured that popularity, and pulpit drollery, are always combined. Albert Smith, it is true, never entered a pulpit, but his testimony on this subject is worth having. He declares that without a very large admixture of the comic element into his lectures, he would have met with no success. With all his intellect and versatile powers, he was obliged to take Punch and Judy with him into the Egyptian Hall; without their co-operation he would have been left alone in his glory, or left without any great or rapturous applause. In like manner, let a minister be very pious and very eloquent, and he will be popular, in the ordinary sense of the term; but let him take Punch into the pulpit, and his popularity will exceed all bounds. But before I proceed, let me lay before you the following testimony of Albert Smith on the subject:—

"To-night is the 268th representation of the entertainment: some said I did not give enough of China; others that they did

not care about the mere statistics, descriptions, or history of the country, but they wanted what they vaguely described as "the fun." I went on altering, polishing, inserting, guided entirely in the manner by which I felt the audience received my changes, and this unceasing attention finally led me to a very terrible conclusion—painful for an intelligent man to contemplate in this age of progress and of high-pressure intellect—that my audience did not care one straw for mere instruction, unless it slipped into my lecture under cover of a joke; but they came here entirely to be amused."

It may be said that Albert Smith's was a mere secular gathering. It was so, but the same law holds good in our religious assemblies.* In 5.'60, I was at a public meeting in Kingsgate Street Chapel. Mr. Empee was in the chair. A good brother prayed that there might be no fun. The chairman said, that he coincided with that petition. But the absence of the fun made the meeting a very dull affair. There was looking at the clock, or at a book, there was whispering, there was yawning, and all the unmistakeable signs of the inattention which reigned within. The doctrine was sound, the statements were correct, the speakers were respectable; but the wheels went round most heavily for want of steam. At length some laughable stories were told about Paddy, and they operated on the auditory like an electric shock; no more listlessness, no more fidgitiness, no more long faces, but all seemed as pleased as Punch after the alteration had taken place.

You see, then, Dr. Gammon, that I fully agree with you in opinion about jocular preaching leading to popularity. Wherein then do we disagree? In

* I know that the apology made for jocularity is, that the common people require it; it fixes their attention, and affords matter for conversation afterwards; for a sentence out of the common road is better remembered than all the rest. This may be true, but the effect it has is only a loud laugh amongst their acquaintance. Not one person is edified, and many are offended by such-like expressions.—*Thornton to Berridge.*

this; that popularity obtained by such means, is purchased at too dear a rate—that religious popularity is sometimes a delusion and often a snare. The inferior clergy like to be stared at, like to be talked of, like to be photographed, like to be exhibited in the pictures or paragraphs of a newspaper or religious magazine. But true greatness seeks the shade, and even dreads the incense of flattery, or of popular applause. John Foster and Robert Hall never resorted to anything like trickery for making themselves known or for making themselves great. It is not very easy to become popular as a preacher of the gospel, but it is very easy to become popular as a jocular preacher of it. Let one who has hitherto been monotonous and dull, become facetious; let him be more ready to run down the Arminian, than to run down the drunkard or the thief; let him be more zealous for the five points, than for the ten commandments; and let him be all this, and do all this, in a right-down jovial manner, and he will suddenly rise into popularity, and even into a reputation for an acquaintance with the deep things of God. But you must not look upon mere popularity as a mark of the blessing of God. Theodore Parker kept up one of the largest congregations ever known, yet in his preaching he would denounce Christianity, and caricature the Saviour of the world.

Yea, popularity covereth a multitude of sins. Let a man be clothed with this beautiful garment, and he is instantly sought after. All who are in difficulty or in debt, make use of him as they would make use of a raree show. No matter whether he is Calvinist or Arminian; he is not wanted to expound a doctrine, but to collect a crowd; not to warn them that are unruly, to comfort the feeble minded, or to support

the weak, but to improve the funds. Many years ago, the most popular preacher of the day was appointed to preach for the London Missionary Society. Having previously sought the retirement of the country as a preparation for this great work, he ascends the pulpit, and tells the people that he is doubtful whether his scarce sea-worthy bark would serve him on that solemn occasion. However, for three hours he sends forth thunder and lightning against the very Society he was invited to recommend. The directors stand aghast—the people go out—and at the doors there is a beggarly amount of empty boxes. The preacher was wrong—was fearfully wrong. And yet, perhaps, his wrongdoing might be considered as the penalty for holding men's persons, or men's eloquence, or men's popularity, in admiration because of advantage.

LETTER XXX.

JOCULAR PREACHING—Reasons against it.

To Dr. Jacob Chalkos, Fellow of Brazen-nose College; Master of the High School in London, and one of the most jocular preachers of the day.

WHILE preaching the gospel, you are guilty, not only of jesting, but of scurrilous jesting, and even of ridiculing the people of God. This is wrong—is fearfully wrong—because, in your case, it must proceed from a feeling of self-importance, and of superior insight into the ways of the Lord. This, of itself, is enough to condemn the impropriety I complain of. I would not say, however, that all jesting, even about eternal things, must necessarily proceed from this corrupt motive. No! there are those who are very droll and very religious at the same time; these are generally men of uncultivated yet of independent mind. They express their feelings in their own way, without being hampered with conventional usages and prescribed forms. "Of some" I would "have compassion, making a difference;" especially I would make a difference in their favour who are unconsciously jocose, and whose jocularity proceeds from no corrupt motive, and from no want of humility or the fear of the Lord.

a. I would make a difference in favour of Sammy Hick, who was not only exceedingly droll, but exceedingly humble and exceedingly amiable. Once he was confronted with Taylor, who

was called the devil's chaplain. This apostle of infidelity said to Sammy, "Your master stole an ass." This piece of profanity struck the good man to the heart. He went home stricken with sorrow: he lay awake weeping all night, exclaiming, "I have heard of my Master being called a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, but I never before heard of his being called a thief!" What piety! what beautiful simplicity of character does this little incident unfold. I fear that very few of us who preach the gospel would be disposed to weep from a similar cause! But who could forbear smiling to hear Sammy pray for an old cow which had been taken ill? He was accustomed to pray for the recovery of diseased cattle, as well as for the advent of fine weather.

b. Mr. Charrier, formerly Independent Minister of Liverpool, related to my friend and quondam fellowstudent, the Rev. G. Rose, the following incident of undesigned drollery. One of the roughs being at the prayer-meeting held in the vestry, and wishing to pray for one of his companions, addressed the throne of grace in the following terms: "Lord, remember Jack; he lives in yonder alley, the left-hand side as you go down; and, Lord, if thou dost not know him by that, he squints with one eye." How profane! and yet in *his* mind there might have been no profanity, and no want of reverence for the supreme Being.

c. In the neighbourhood of Bradford there lived an eccentric Baptist preacher, called Father Hinton. Once an *Independent* congregation had assembled to hear Mr. Jay, who, from some cause or other, did not arrive. Mr. Hinton goes into the pulpit to supply his place. He takes for his text the words, "One Lord, one faith;" the next words in the text are, "one baptism;" but instead of pronouncing those words, he said, "Don't be alarmed, I a'int going no farther." This was certainly a joke, and fitted to create a smile, but Mr. Hinton never intended it as a joke; it was merely his own way of expressing forbearance towards his Independent brethren.

d. The late Mr. Bowes told me of a good man who was accustomed to make a running commentary, and sometimes a very laughable one too, on the hymns he gave out in public worship. For instance, in reading the hymn, "Begone, unbelief," he would stop short and say, "Do you hear, you old hag? I say, begone!" at the same time taking his eyes off the book and fixing them on the floor as though he really was looking at the "old hag" he was commanding to go away. This was very amusing, yet I can easily conceive that the good man might have been very solemn and very far removed from a spirit of levity in relation to sacred things.

Now only conceive of all these worthies being assembled in the same church; what a motley crew! and what a burlesque on the worship of God! Here is one with a diseased cow, another with a squint-eye, another with one baptism, and another with his "old hag." Such an assembly would be somewhat analogous to the New Zealand congregation, where the chief was dressed in a long carter's frock, over which were two black waistcoats, but without trowsers, shoes, or stockings. The women forced their way into gowns of all shapes and sizes. One boy had a shirt on, once white, over which he had the body of a woman's gown, to answer the purpose of a jacket. Many women who could not procure a gown, were dressed in men's striped shirts. One man had inverted the order of the shirt, and had forced his legs through the sleeves, making of it a pair of trousers, and another had tied a pair of trousers round his neck! All this was amusing enough: but the most amusing thing of all was, that they were perfectly unconscious of having done anything to excite a smile. In this respect these untutored savages perfectly resembled Sammy Hicks and those other Christian oddities to whom I have just referred.

But, Dr. Chalkos, these men can give you no countenance, and no support: because they knew no better than to indulge in this kind of drollery. But you do know better. They did it to please themselves, but you do it to please the people. They were prompted by a feeling of humility, but you are prompted by a feeling of pride and vain glory. You speak as though you had attained to some wondrous height whence you could look down on all the inferior clergy below. Thus one of your friends says:*

* "Earthen Vessel," 8, 12, '59.

"I have completed my 80th year, and I still belong to the Gill family, without any cross breed, or yea and nay."

What a thing to boast of! How nearly extremes meet. Here is a man abhorring self-righteousness, and yet adopting the proud-speaking and self-applauding language of those Pharisees, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others!

Oh! Dr. Chalkos; you have contributed in no ordinary degree to that tone of arrogance, and of self-conceit, which distinguish certain religionists of the present day. Waxing confident by your boldness, youth and inexperience have rushed forward to make game of good men, and to pronounce authoritatively upon the decrees of God, or upon the most abstruse points of a mere speculative theology! The sceptic may sneer at all this; wicked men may laugh at all this; and party spirit may be pleased with all this; but after all, we should earnestly desire "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which, in the sight of God, is of great price."

LETTER XXXI.

INJURY TO THE PEOPLE.

I AM now to show in what manner pulpit jocularity becomes injurious to the congregation. At first sight it might appear rather advantageous than otherwise; there may be the broad grin, the loud laugh, or some other sign of the satisfaction that reigns within: but afterwards there will be bitterness, and gloom, and disappointment, and the utter absence of what is acceptable to God, or approved of men. If you ask how this mournful result can be produced, I answer—

1. It must be destructive of all seriousness in the worship of God. In a Christian assembly, there ought to be the solemnity of death, and the silence of the grave. This is not saying that there ought to be the feeling of gloom, or of some dreadful alarm. Oh no! The utmost cheerfulness, and the loudest songs, may most easily comport with reverence, and with godly fear. There is joy among the angels of God; but even angels cover their faces with their wings while they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts!" If you think that in a place of worship I want wry faces, whining tones, or sanctimonious behaviour, you are dreadfully mistaken. No! with all my heart, I would say, "From all affectation, cant, and hypocrisy, good Lord deliver us." But I want the preparations of the heart which are from above: I want the rules of decency and order to be observed in the house of the Lord: I want all men to feel that "God is a spirit, and that they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth:" I want a stranger, coming into a Christian assembly, to be struck with its unworldly character; with the difference between earth and heaven; between a playhouse and a chapel; between the respect which is due to man, and the reverence which is due to God; and witnessing a behaviour so holy and so devout, to fall down and report that God is among them of a truth. But, if instead of all this, he should see "Punch in the pulpit," and hear ridiculous stories and droll remarks—if he should witness in the congregation that indecorum which people would be ashamed of in what is called genteel society, then might he consider that he had strayed, not into a place of worship, but into a place of amusement, or, at any rate, into a place where religion

was considered as a farce, and the Bible as a book of jests, or as a cunningly devised fable.*

2. But this is not the only injury you do the people; you not only make them irreverent in the house of God, but you make them suspicious with regard to yourself. I will not say that it is impossible, but really it is very hard, to believe that a man can joke about religion, and at the same time be very sincere, or very much in earnest about it. If you saw a house on fire, the inmates of which were fast asleep, you would rush into that house, you would lift up your voice, you would stretch out your arms, you would say, "Escape for your life!" You would risk your own safety to ensure the safety of others; you would do anything and you would do everything that humanity could dictate, or that human strength could perform. But there is one thing you would not do—you would utter no jokes,—you would tell no ridiculous tales,—you would put forth no effort to create amusement or to excite a laugh. And why would you not do it? Because you would be too sincere and too much in earnest to do it; because you know that if you were guilty of it, the people would say that your loud voice or violent gesticulation was only a sham—that you were only raising a false alarm, or trying some fearful experiment on the fears of those you seemed anxious to save.

Why, then, should you be less serious with regard to "the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched?" I do not say that you would laugh at the

* "Professors being destitute of spiritual life and feeling must be called gospel puppets danced with devotional wires. A church is fitted up for their stage with boxes, pit, and gallery, and Sunday is the day of acting. During the performance some are mighty *decent* characters, like a king and queen of France; others rude and racketty, like cobbler, Punch, and his wife."—*Berridge.*

groans of the dying, and the horrors of the damned. No! that be far from you. I know that humanity is far superior to Christianity, or rather to the Antinomian view of it. But how can you joke at all in relation to such a theme? (and every sermon must relate to it.) Can you wonder that in doing so, people should accuse you of insincerity, or of infidelity, or even of something worse than infidelity itself? Greatly as the celebrated Hume is to be blamed for his rash and infidel speculations, he is almost entirely free from the charge justly made against Voltaire, of treating these matters with ridicule or with ribaldry, or even with levity unfitted to subjects of such overwhelming importance.*

Consider how your conduct is fitted to harden the sinner in his unbelief. In speaking of your sermon, one of your hearers says, "The minister uttered so many solemn things about a lost soul, that I really began to feel some alarm for my safety. He seemed to have the 'thoughts that breathe and the words that burn;' as with the sound of a trumpet I seemed to be awakened out of sleep to flee from the wrath to come. But very soon these feelings passed off; indeed I may say that the preacher himself made them pass off, for, after speaking of most solemn things, he began telling some laughable tales. Then I was persuaded that all his previous solemnity was nothing but moonshine; that in my case there was nothing particularly wrong; that he had only been speaking professionally, or as the stipendiary expositor of certain gloomy and uncharitable opinions which some secular interest required to be maintained. It is said that Nero fiddled while Rome was in flames: he was a monster; but my minister

* Lord Brougham at the University of Edinburgh.

is not a monster; if he had seen me in imminent danger of falling into the fire, or into the water, or into any circumstances of peril, he would have manifested no levity. How then, in the name of reason, could he joke, if he *really* believed I was in danger of the devouring flame, and of the everlasting burnings?"

LETTER XXXII.

DEATH TO THE MINISTER.

DAVID GARRICK had one face for tragedy and another for comedy; and with equal facility he could draw forth floods of tears or thunders of applause; but why should you be ambitious of resembling an actor upon the stage? "Nowhere is a man's soul more in danger than in the priest's office." If you wilfully joke in relation to eternal things, you are a dead man; and if you persist in that course, you will be damned. By the agency of galvanism, a dead frog may be made to simulate the movements of a living one; and by the agency of Hyper-Calvinism, the antics of a mountebank may be made to resemble the actions of a man of God. I know that you would nickname and even ridicule the late Rev. Harington Evans; nevertheless he is with me, and against you on this subject. "Beware," said he, "of levity. I write feelingly; my love of joke has been a sore trial to me all my journey." Now it is worthy of remark, that Mr. Evans never joked in the pulpit. His testimony, therefore, is the more important; for if he thus condemns levity out of the pulpit, how much more must he have condemned it

in the pulpit, where it must be more outrageous than in any of the ordinary walks of private life.*

Mr. Buchanan, in his "Christian researches in India," speaks of the vultures exhibiting a shocking familiarity with man through the long habit of preying upon human bodies. Now, I believe that we may exhibit a shocking familiarity with divine truth through the long habit of handling it, of dividing it, and sometimes of tearing it in pieces for the nourishment of the people of God. If you joke about the truth, you must necessarily lose the sense of its value, its savour, and its importance; and even if you do not joke about it, yet if you cease to regard it in a devotional spirit, you will soon fall down from the activities of religion into the unsatisfying form, or the empty name. It was the complaint of Henry Martyn, that in meeting with a beautiful text, he felt instinctively inclined to look at it with the view of making a discourse rather than with the view of making it a subject of meditation and prayer.

There are many ministers who would be shocked with the infidel practice of jesting with eternal things, yet who suffer themselves to joke about them. I knew Mr. Woyzo; his popularity was scarcely inferior to that of any other minister in the kingdom; but his preaching was disfigured with jocularity and

* "Your vein of humour, and mine, seem much alike: if there is any difference between us, it is here: I strive against mine, while you indulge in yours. I fight against mine because I find the ludicrous spirit just as dangerous as the sullen one; and it is much the same to our great adversary whether he falls in with a capricious or a facetious turn of mind. I could not help smiling at your facetious remarks, yet something came across my mind. Is this method agreeable to the idea we ought to entertain of a father in Israel? It would pass well in a newspaper, or in anything calculated for public entertainment, but it certainly wanted the seriousness becoming a Christian minister." —*Thornton to Berridge.*

with that kind of it which is acceptable to an ungodly man. Now it is a remarkable fact, that when this minister was dying and when he knew that he was dying, he listened with satisfaction to the reading of some nonsensical tale. Now, Dr. Chalkos, I am not going to unchristianize him for this; but I would merely suggest, whether his previous habit of pulpit joking might not have induced that state of mind which made him, in a dying hour, listen to what is so foreign from the hopes and the aspirations of a man of God.*

Who was ever more distinguished for learning, for eloquence, and for a most surprising versatility of genius than the late R. Robinson, of Cambridge? Yet before he died, he fell not into immorality or crime, but into the error of denying the truth, which he had so eloquently and so learnedly maintained. Now, I have been credibly informed that his fall was preceded by pulpit jocularity; he would speak of sacred subjects in the most flippant manner, and would even say, "Now for a dish of tripe out of the book of Leviticus," when about to read that part of the word of God.

LETTER XXXIII.

GREAT PREACHERS NO JOKERS.

COWPER wrote most cheerfully and sang most sweetly of divine things; but at the same time did he not write most seriously of what a minister ought to be?

* I was born with a fool's cap on; odd thoughts break from me as abruptly as croaking from a raven. But why not put the cap off? It abides in whole or part, for want of a closer walk with God and a nearer communion with him. When I creep near the throne this humour disappears.—*Berridge.*

Did he not urge most rationally and most scripturally the importance of gravity in a man who speaks in the name of Almighty God? I believe that it would be a cruel thing, or at least a ludicrous thing, to say that the following lines do not reprove Mikros, Neaniskos, and all your laughter-loving divines:—

> He that negotiates between God and man
> As God's ambassador, the grand concerns
> Of judgment and of mercy, should beware
> Of lightness in his speech. 'Tis pitiful
> To court a grin, when you should woo a soul,
> To break a jest when pity should inspire
> Pathetic exhortation; and to address
> The skittish fancy with facetious tales,
> When sent with God's commission to the heart.
> So did not Paul; direct me to a quip
> Or merry turn in all he ever wrote,
> And I consent you take it for your text,
> Your only text till sides and benches fail.
> No, he was serious in a serious cause,
> And understood too well the weighty terms
> That he had taken in charge. He would not stoop
> To conquer those by jocular exploits,
> Whom truth and soberness assailed in vain.

You know little, and care less, for James Bridaine, but few ever equalled him in the spiritual power of his preaching; and none ever surpassed him in public approbation. Though a mere youth, he traversed the country as a revivalist. For the metropolis, and for other great cities, he had no ambition, but confined his ministry to villages, and to country places. Travelling on foot, carrying with him his small bundle of necessaries, clad in a thread-bare garment, his ordinary diet bread and water and an onion. He preached everywhere with eloquence, fidelity, and wonderful success; effects were produced which have few parallels in ancient or in modern times. From early morn till late at night he con-

tinued his devoted labours for the salvation of men, and for the glory of God.

Contrary to his wishes, and even to his remonstrances, he is appointed to preach in a large town. Here he arrives with a stick in his hand and a knapsack on his back; in his pocket are a few sermons, and several hymns, of his own composition. The people, seeing this meanly-clad youth, can scarcely believe that he is the preacher appointed for that place: at length, satisfied on that point, they become indignant at the affront which is put upon them, and determine to absent themselves from his ministrations. On Wednesday the youth goes to the church, but it is empty! But so ardent is his zeal that it is not to be extinguished in this way; he goes into the streets wearing his clerical garments, and ringing a bell. By a sight so novel a crowd is attracted, and they are invited to the next sermon, the preacher adding, "It is the Lord Jesus Christ who sends me."

At his second appearance in the church there is a large congregation; but beginning the service by singing one of his own hymns, and inviting the people to join him, they burst out into a loud laugh, and the great majority leave the church. Those who remain are addressed by him in a tone so loving and so pathetic that they are bathed in tears. From this time the church is crowded. After protracted services he does not retire for repose, but continues to warn the sinner, and to encourage the penitent. His fame spreads wider and wider, till all in the district have heard him preach, and nearly all have been savingly impressed by his ministry. Such is the hold he has on the public mind that thousands come out to meet him from those cities and places which are the scenes of his ministrations. But in

the midst of these demonstrations he is plainly clad and unaffectedly humble. "Let us," said he, "exhibit Jesus Christ in his grandeur, his pity, and his grace, and let our own littleness be made clearly apparent."

His preaching was bold, vigorous, and earnest; he had a voice of immense power, which could be heard at an almost incredible distance. One sentence was often uttered with thrilling effect, "Sinners, I speak to you in the name of Jesus Christ; hear me!" And most remarkable is it that he was equally attentive to individuals as to great multitudes. In this he has but few imitators; many will do good, but it must be in public; yet if James Bridaine heard of any notorious characters he would seek them out, and stay with them all day, and even all night, that he might reclaim them. With all this devotedness he had a strong sense of humour, but in preaching he *never* indulged in it. Being in earnest, he was always solemn, and always under the conviction that it was a very impudent thing to joke in the service of God.

The effect of his preaching was overwhelming. Your preaching, Dr. Chalkos, is frequently interrupted by grinning and by laughter; but his was frequently interrupted by sobs and cries, and, very frequently, the whole congregation was convulsed with emotion. For years he suffered from a disease which produced the most excruciating pain. At length he submits to a surgical operation which is clumsily performed. His agonies are frightful, but not a murmur escapes his lips. He says, "O, Jesus, thou didst suffer much more for me." Feeling that his end is near, he exclaims, while expiring, "O my God, this is the most glorious day of my life." Of this man I have told you many wonderful things,

but the most wonderful thing of all concerning him is here untold.

Look at John Howe, or at John Bunyan. The latter had, I have no doubt, a keen sense of the ridiculous; yet he was scarcely ever known to utter a joke. He did, indeed, on one occasion, say something about "every tub standing on its own bottom," while conversing with a friend near a cooper's workshop; but he never put on a fool's cap, and never appeared like "Punch in the pulpit." Look at Whitfield and Wesley, Richard Watson and Robert Hall,* or look at Dr. Chalmers, or at John Angell James. Now, while their preaching was far enough removed from gloom or tediousness, it never could be charged with ridiculousness. If it should be said that in the earlier years of their ministry it might have been so; I can easily admit that they might have exhibited some of the graceful levity of youth: but, generally speaking, what a minister is in early life, he is also in its decline, with regard to the general tone and character of his ministrations.

A young man may have great vivacity without any levity at all. Once there was a holy youth, who from earliest years seemed destined for the pulpit. He walked with God, and many saw his face as if it had been the face of an angel. With great piety, great intelligence, and with an easy elocution, he was of necessity a great preacher; but he was not great as some men count greatness. In his preaching there was no fun, no levity, no ridi-

* It is well known that this eminent man, though now and then very facetious in the social circle, was never so in the house of God. I have heard that Mr. Wilks once reproved him for his story-telling; to which Mr. Hall replied, "Mr. Wilks and I both tell stories, but with this difference; he tells his in the pulpit, while I tell mine out of it."

cule, and no running down of good men. Nevertheless his pulpit oratory was of the most effective kind: hardest hearts were made to heave with godly sorrow, and driest eyes to flow with penitential tears. Oh, Dr. Chalkos, tell the aspirants for pulpit honours to be natural, and to be prayerful; tell them not to speak as levity, or as popularity, but as the spirit of prayer and of sanctity shall give them utterance; and tell them, if they would be animated by a bright example, to look at Thomas Spencer, a young man, not distinguished for a browbeating oratory and a brazen face, but for "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

But I fear that you will do nothing of the kind, and that you will recommend none of these illustrious names as models of pulpit excellence, or as any justification of a grave and solemn address on subjects of everlasting importance. Perhaps you may say that had they possessed your strength of faith, they would have burst the slavish chains called reverence and godly fear, and that they would have found a sweet liberty in lashing with unmeasured ridicule, and with unutterable scorn, that duty-faith ministry which, more than immorality or crime, destroys the prosperity of the church and the happiness of the world.

LETTER XXXIV.

NO JOKERS AT REVIVALS.

WHERE there is a jovial preacher, there will also be a jovial congregation; but there will be none of those strong cryings, and supplications, and tears, which are the unmistakeable signs of the religion that reigns within; there will be no signs of a glorious awakening, such as that for which Ireland was recently distinguished. The Ulster revival! Glorious event, ever to be remembered in the annals of our country, and in the history of the world. Then was there joy unspeakable and full of glory: "the heavens dropped down from above, and the skies poured forth righteousness." If there came not forth a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, there came forth a sacred influence which destroyed the love of sin, and all the works of the devil. Young men and maidens, old men and childen, were stricken down, as Saul of Tarsus was stricken down; but like him were stricken down to rise up into newness of life, to walk in the light of God's countenance, to rejoice in his name all the day long, and in his righteousness to be exalted.

Now, Dr. Chalkos, this important question occurs: what kind of ministry was that which produced these effects? I believe you will admit that it was not the hyper-jocular ministry that did it. At any rate there was no levity in it, and nothing in it to produce a grin or to raise a laugh. A ministry of this kind would do well enough where the world is, where Antinomianism is, where party spirit is; but it will not do where the Spirit of God is. Only think of introducing a jocular minister into a revival

meeting! It would be like introducing the devil among the sons of God.

You sneer at the preaching of such a man as Mr. Radcliffe. It has no clap-trap, no facetiousness, no running down of certain denominational views. No! it has nothing to run down but sin and wickedness, and nothing to exalt but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. They say, O man of God, that thou art not in holy orders: they are mistaken; thou hast received holy orders from the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Therefore thou hast cheerfulness without levity, solemnity without gloom, and earnestness without affectation. What a contrast in all this to the preaching of those merry-andrews who, according to Gurnall, "make a sermon nothing but matter of wit, and flaunt it forth in garish discourse." "Such a sermon," he says, "is too much like a child's baby, from which, if you take the dressing, the rest is worth nothing. Satan budges not for a thousand such squibs and wit cracks."

Recently there was a convocation of strict Baptists at Deptford, and with great pomposity it is called a great revival meeting! But O, such a revival! What a burlesque upon the Scriptural use of the term. Mr. Coryphaeus struck the keynote, and such a laughable tune followed as set the whole congregation in a roar. The five points seemed to be the burden of the song, and the doctrine of strict communion the mark of the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus. To shew you that I do not exaggerate, I will give you a verbatim copy of the speech of Mr. Coryphaeus on that remarkable occasion. Here it is:—

"There are several half Baptist ministers, I once met with a gentleman in the country; he asked me if I would baptize him if he came to town. He said, 'I am a Baptist, but I don't see

strict communion! If I come to town will you baptize me?' I said, "Yes, if you will give me one piece of information; if you will tell me which half of you it is that is a Baptist, I will baptize that, and stop till the other half is converted.'* So he did not come, and I didn't have the work. The truth is, these half Baptists are not Baptists at all. If you walk the high and dry road, we will walk the deep and wet road."

Now I don't deny that this was a capital joke, and that it was fitted to produce the merriment that followed the utterance of it. But I do deny that it was fitted to produce brotherly kindness and charity, or that it had anything to do with a revival of the work of God.

LETTER XXXV.

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE ABOUT JOKING?

It saith everything against it. Thornton, in writing to Berridge, says:—

"I recollect but one humourous passage in the Bible, which is that of Elijah, and when the peculiar circumstances of it are considered, nothing could be more seasonable, nothing could so expose the impotency of their false gods, and absurdity of their worship. The prophets often speak ironically, sometimes satirically; I do not ever remember their speaking ludicrously, Our Lord and his Apostles never had recourse to such methods. The short abstracts we have of their sermons and of their conversations are all of a serious strain, and ministers cannot copy after a better example."

This witness is true. Can you conceive of Peter and Paul interlarding their discourse with a joke? The idea is preposterous. We could as soon think that the one would go into the church drunk, and

* Earthen Vessell, p. 94, '61.

that the other would follow after him with oaths and curses, as to suppose that either of them would think of doing so. This you will not deny. Then how inconsistent is it for you to be guilty of jocular preaching—you, who lay claim to a greater resemblance to the Apostles, and to a more intimate acquaintance with their doctrines than all other men. Verily, you are only one remove from the scoffer, who talks not of religion save to make it the butt of his ridicule. It is nothing to say that his intention is bad, but that yours is good; that he wishes to make infidels, but that you wish to make believers. The answer is, that there is no text which asserts, and no Scripture that warrants the supposition, that God is a funny God, or that He ever makes jocularity His power unto the salvation of the soul.

Neither can it be said that in the days of the Apostles there was no market and no demand for this kind of thing. There was a great demand for it. We might infer this from the sameness of human nature in every age of the world. But we are not left to a mere inference on the subject; for the fact is, that Macrobius wrote a book on the whole art and mystery of joking, and even records the jests of Augustus Cæsar, of Cicero, and of other citizens of the Roman Empire. These authorities must have given a tone to public opinion on the subject, but Paul would not conform to that opinion; he would not infuse anything jocular into his reasoning about temperance, righteousness, and a judgment to come; because he would not mingle the sacred and the profane, nor say anything inconsistent with the character of a holy man of God.

It is not, however, the part of wisdom to contend for what is impracticable, or, as Barrow says, to be always tied to knit the brow, to squeeze the brain,

and to be sadly dumpish, or seriously pensive. I have sometimes heard a witticism from the pulpit that has been so pertinent, and so beautiful, that instead of being angry with the preacher, I have the more admired him on account of it, There may sometimes be levity without criminality, or without anything but physical weakness for its moving cause. Under certain circumstances, I should think none the worse of a minister who should burst out into a loud laugh amidst the assembly of the saints. I should think the worse of him if he did it designedly, or without regret. But I must remember that we live in a funny world, and that events will take place enough to disturb the gravity of a man, who, in ordinary cases, may be as sober as a judge.

Only think of Jay's story of what occurred while he was preaching in Broad Street Meeting. Just before the close of his service a bull rushes into the meeting: holy men, in deacons' orders, arrest his progress up the aisle, and positively take the bull by the horns, while they look up very gravely at the pulpit. This was ludicrous enough, but more ludicrous still they bawl out, with all the congregation, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," as though the advent of the bull was a blessing glorious enough to call forth the loudest songs of angels and of men! The bull did not roar out on this occasion, but if he had done so, he would have acted quite as rationally as the rest of the assembly. Now if Jay had burst out into a loud laugh at all this, it would have been perfectly natural, and perfectly in keeping with the character of a man of God while dwelling in mortal clay.

Oh, how much I have admired the sparkling wit emanating from a benevolent heart, and a well-

informed mind and how much I have pitied those idiots who cannot laugh! They are in the same category as those who cannot see, or cannot hear, or cannot act in a way consistent with the common nature of man. Thus, Dr. Chalkos, I make you a very large and a very handsome concession on the subject; but don't make an improper use of it; don't say that it involves the surrender of the position I am trying to maintain. In my next letter I shall prove that all pulpit jesting is utterly condemned in the word of God.

LETTER XXXVI.

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?

I SHALL now proceed to point out, illustrate, and explain, some of those passages which, more or less, condemn the practice you are guilty of. The first in order is:—

"When I was therefore thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay?"—2 Cor. i. 17.

It is true that *lightness* in this passage refers more to fickleness than to frivolity. "With regard to my coming to you, I said, '*yea*,' but through uncontrollable circumstances, it turned out to be '*nay*.' But I was guilty of no fickleness, for I really intended to come. There is uncertainty in my movements, but there is no uncertainty in the gospel which I preach: if I am bound, the word of God is not bound. Now, with regard to my coming, I said

yea, but it turned out to be *nay*. Yet, remember that the gospel cannot say yea, and then, through some uncontrollable circumstance, turn out to be *nay*. No; as God is true, our preaching towards you was not yea and nay."

I really think if this passage were more strictly examined into, that it would not be so often quoted as a term of reproach. It is now the shibboleth* of a party, who, if not with sword in hand, yet with a tongue or a slang that is a sharp sword, stand forth as the guardians and defenders of the promised land. Let a man say, "I am no yea and nay minister," and he passes muster; but let another come without making this boast, and his reputation is slain as the bodies of the Ephraimites were slain at the passages of Jordan.

But, after all, and from a certain point of view, this passage is most pertinent to the subject under consideration, for Paul is here defending himself against the charge of being prompted by the flesh in prosecuting the work of the ministry. When he said anything, or did anything, or suffered anything for his master, he was not prompted by feelings of vain glory, or of popular applause. Now, I ask, does any man who is jocular in his preaching obey the prompting of the flesh or of the Spirit† There is but one answer, indeed there can be but one answer to such a question.

I have observed that, in preaching, you can now and then be very prosy and very tame; then a con-

* It is a curious fact that several nations cannot pronounce certain letters. Some of our continental neighbours cannot pronounce *th*. The German Jews substitute *ss* for *th*. Thus instead of saying *baith* (a house), they say baiss.—Judges xii. 6.

† I trust the Lord has given me a mind beyond lightness or even of low expression; for I do not like either, as they are only calculated to please the flesh.—*J. Dearing, Ipswich.*

sequent listlessness comes over the congregation. It appears to me that you say within yourself, "This will not do," and out there comes some violent tirade against Arminianism or against bastard Calvinism. The effect is instantaneous; the long faces and the wry faces relax into a smile, and the dear people are themselves again. I admit that this interpretation of what I have witnessed in your chapel, is only a matter of opinion. I may be mistaken, but it is scarcely a matter of opinion to say that pulpit jesting is only indulged in to please the flesh; for extravagance like this will always command a grin, and collect a crowd.

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying."—Eph. iv. 29.

Now "corrupt communication" means not only what is contrary to Christian morality, but also what is contrary to Christian edification; and who is bold enough to say that joking is truly edifying, that it has a tendency to make us more prayerful, more watchful, and more holy? None will say this; but all who read this passage will run* to the conclusion, that joking is one of the things which grieve the Spirit of God. But there is a way of evading this, and similar admonitions, which is truly deceptive, but at the same time truly descriptive of the Antinomian theology. It is this; grieving the Spirit can do the believer no harm; because he is like Christ, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.

I have heard you appeal to Balaam in support of

* "That he may run that readeth it." Hab. ii. 2. This text is never quoted correctly; "it is so plain that they who run may read it," say they. This is not the meaning; the running is consequent upon the reading; having read about the danger we run to avoid it.

this doctrine. In common with the disciples of the Hyper school, you quote Num. xxiii. 21, thus: "*God* hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." But the fact is, the text does not say this, and certainly does not mean this. The text is, "*He* hath not beheld," &c. This pronoun refers to Balaam and not to God. Balaam did not see anything grievously wrong in this people, and therefore he did not curse them. To say that God sees no sin in his people would be to say that God is destitute of omniscience, and that the thing which David did was not displeasing to the Lord. In effect, nothing but the requirements of a wretched theological system could ever have induced an appeal to Balaam for establishing the impeccability of the people of God.

"Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient."—Eph. v. 4.

Here filthiness means obscenity; foolish talking, buffoonery; and jesting, scurrilous jocularity. All these are unbecoming the saints, and consequently unbecoming the minister of God. A *religious* newspaper glosses over your jesting with the gentle epithet of sanctified humour, but it might as well speak of sanctified obscenity, or of sanctified buffoonery, as of sanctified jesting, for all three are placed upon the same level by the Apostle Paul,

"In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, *gravity*, sincerity," &c,—Titus ii. 7.

Now here it is expressly enjoined on a young minister to be a pattern of gravity to the people of God. And if a young man should be grave, how much more should you be so—you who are now well

stricken in years? I contend not for a mere formal, official, or affected gravity. No! gravity in the text is linked with sincerity, and can have no real existence without it; indeed honesty and gravity mean the same thing.* The minister who is light and laughing is wanting in common honesty, because he cannot be a true representative, or ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I know that you speak on this subject in a very flippant manner,† "Oh," say you, "a donkey or an owl can look very grave, but, I don't wish to resemble either of these worthies. In one word, I don't like grimace." No! you ought not to like it; it is only the fool or the hypocrite who likes it. But if any man should say, I have so much youth in me, and so much fun in me, that I cannot be grave, that man virtually declares himself disqualified for the Christian ministry; for gravity, no less than holiness, becometh the house of the Lord for ever.

"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him."—Ps. lxxxix. 7.

If this text is right, you must be dreadfully wrong. It looks with a frowning aspect upon every pulpit jester, and upon every trifler in the worship of God. How you could preach from it, or even reflect upon it, with a clear conscience, I cannot tell. That you could twist it, and turn it, and make it speak in favour of a little fun in the pulpit, I can easily imagine; but this would be dreadful trifling. I know that this text is in the Old Testament, and that it

* "Whatsoever things are honest, or grave" (*semnos*).—PHIL. iv. 7.

† O, this gravity, said I, what is it worth? What real virtue there in it? Yet, in the Christian ministry, it shall go for holiness, and raise a man's fortune.—*J. Kendall.*

was written under a dispensation which has now passed away; but then in the New Testament, and under a dispensation which still remaineth, it is written, "Let us serve God acceptably, with reverence and with godly fear, for *our* God is a consuming fire."

But in conclusion, I beseech you by the holy, holy, holy, Lord God—by the high vocation wherewith you are called,—by the immorality of filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting, which are not convenient,—by the solemnity of death, and of the judgment day,—by the worthlessness of human applause,—by the venerable character of our Master and Lord,—by the grave example of the first Apostles of the Lamb,—by the reverence due to the worship of God,—by the danger of grieving the Holy Spirit,—and by the Lord Jesus who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearance and his kingdom,—by all these considerations, I beseech you to remember, that "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him."

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